5280

THE DENVER MAGAZINE

Best. Winter. Ever!

An Insider's Guide To All 24 Colorado Ski Resorts

10 EASY WAYS TO SUPPORT THE LOCAL ARTS SCENE
PAGE 64

RIOT BBQ BRINGS BRAWL-WORTHY SMOKED MEATS TO SOUTH DENVER
BY ALLYSON REEDY

"S.O.B.": A DECADE OF NATHANIEL RATELIFF
PAGE 74

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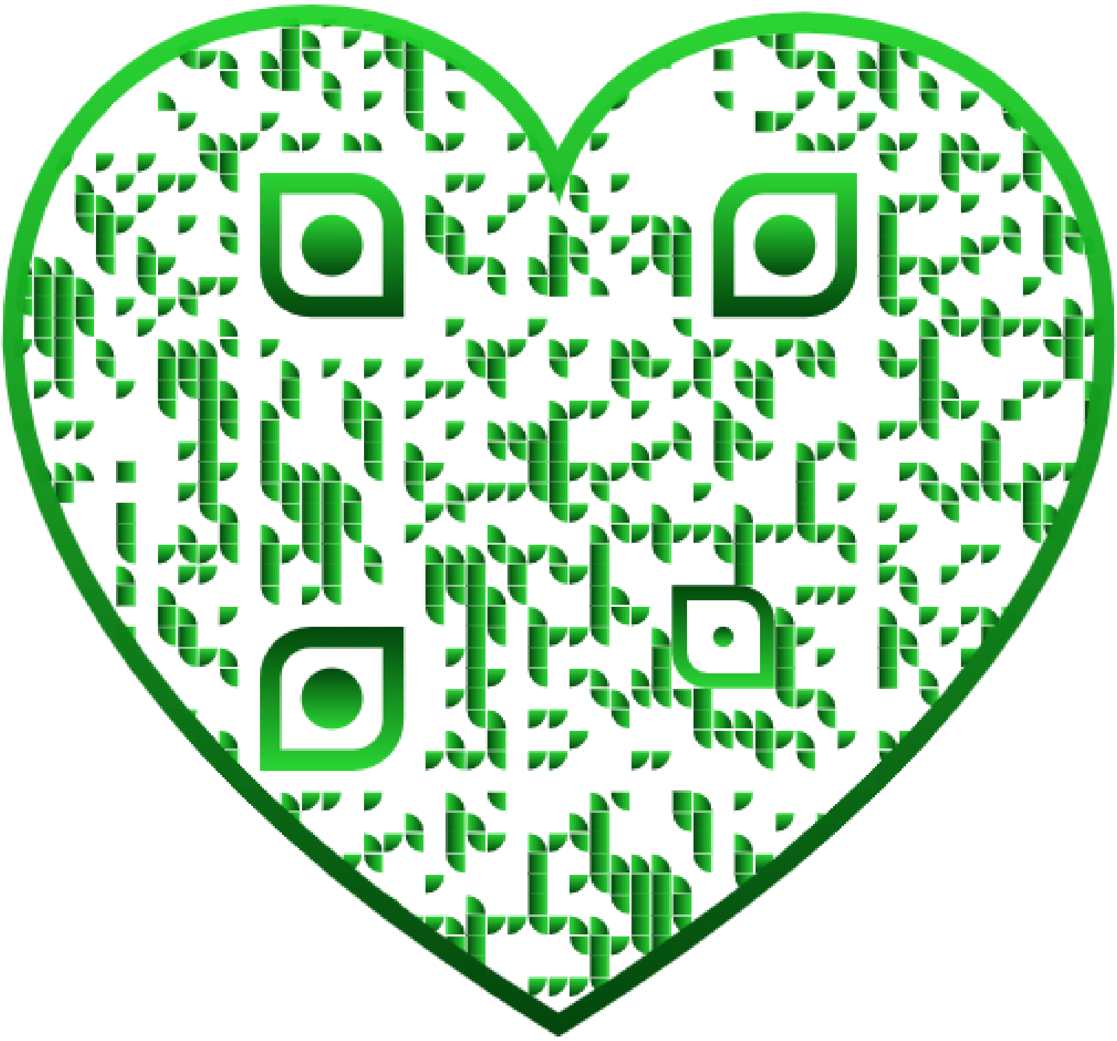

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NOVEMBER 2025

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Danielle SeeWalker inside her Denver studio

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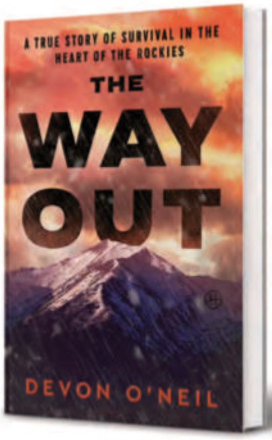

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Photograph taken at Vail Mountain by Max Ritter/Courtesy of Vail Resorts

Clockwise from top left: Sarah Banks (2); Marek Uliasz/Dreamstime; Courtesy of HarperOne; Getty Images (book form)

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Malia Logan

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RESEARCHERS
Sam F. Barrett, Laurenz Busch, Thom Denton, Amanda Price, Julia Ruble

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Laura Beausire, Lisa Blake, Jay Bouchard, Rebecca Bratburd, Julie Dugdale, Amanda M. Faison, Courtney Holden, Sarah Kuta, Elisabeth Kwak-Hefferan, Jenny McCoy, Craig Meyer, Barbara O'Neil, Allyson Reedy, Sara Rosenthal, Michelle Shortall, Daliah Singer

PHOTOGRAPHY & DESIGN

PHOTO EDITORS
Sarah Banks, Charli Ornett

DEPUTY ART DIRECTOR
Sean Parsons

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS
Maria Gabriella Gasparri, David Lauer, Simone Massoni, Serge Seidlitz, Eva Vázquez

5280 ELEVATED, INC.

CEO & PUBLISHER
Charity Huff

FOUNDER
Daniel Brogan

1675 Larimer St., Suite 675, Denver, CO 80202
Tel 303-832-5280 | 5280.com | 5280.inc
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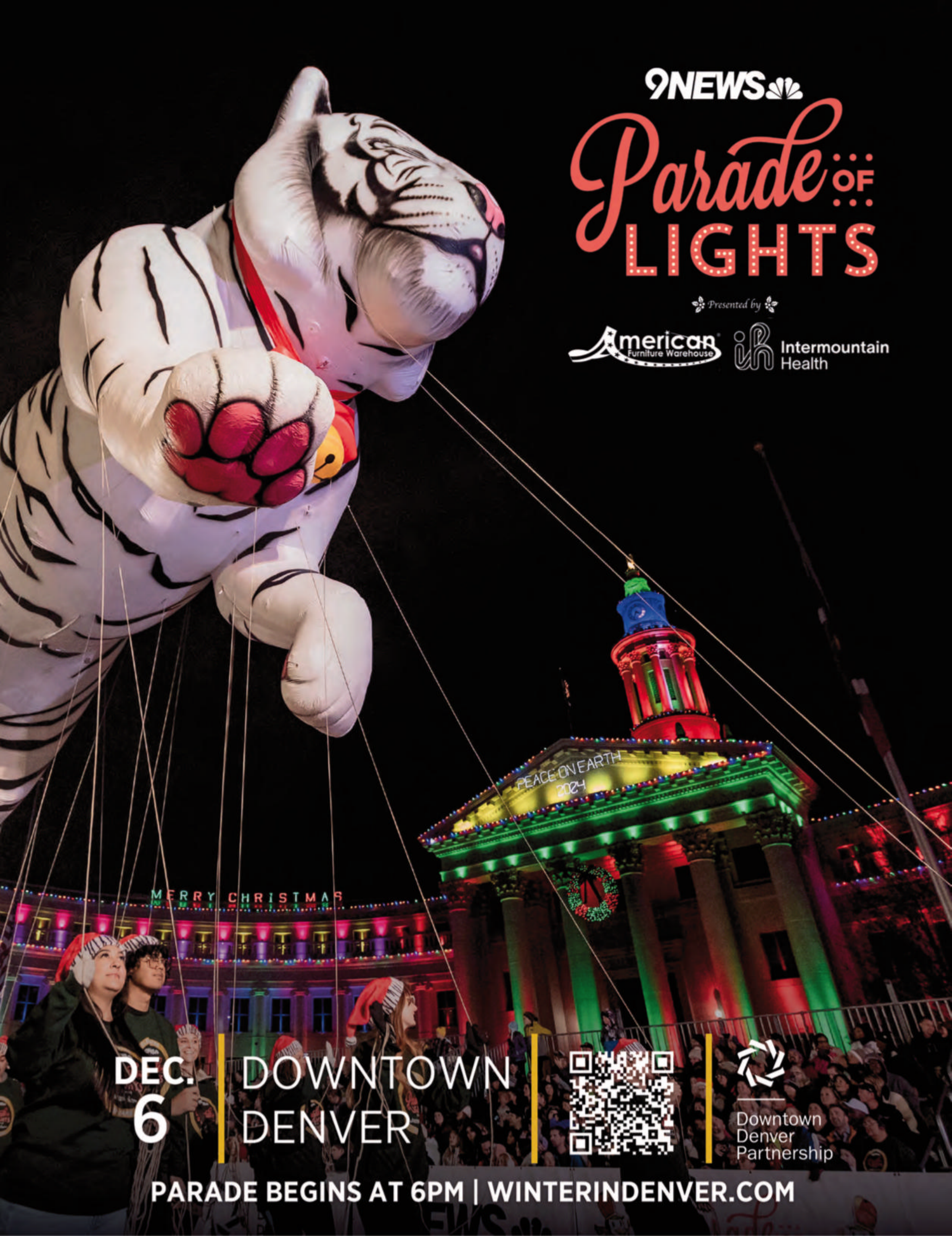
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Fresh turns on a bluebird day at Aspen Mountain

Powder Hounds

I learned to ski on a fake-snow-covered landfill in southern Michigan, and although I've conquered blue groomers—and even, ahem, a few black diamonds—across Colorado since then, I wouldn't call myself an expert. Luckily, two of my colleagues who *are* the real deal collaborated on our cover story, "Best. Winter. Ever." Starting on page 44, it's a guide to all the fun that's to be had at Colorado's 24 ski resorts (plus eight smaller municipal hills).

Digital director Maren Horjus, who conceived of and wrote most of the feature, grew up shredding slightly more challenging terrain than I did: Lake Tahoe, the birthplace of freeskiing in North America. "It's showboat central," Horjus says. "Granite ramparts, feast-or-famine snow, moxie." She is the self-declared best skier on the mountain, but she'll always hang back for a party lap and carries charcuterie and spare mittens and puffies (aka "crisis layers") to make sure her whole group has a good time. "That's probably why I'm a qualified tour guide for this package, and why there's a pretty even distribution of black diamonds, blue squares, and green circles," Horjus says.

The designer on the feature, deputy art director and Montrose native Sean Parsons, however, knows no friends on a powder day—unless they're his wife and three children. The latter have been making turns since they were two, just like Dad. "My biggest tip for teaching littles is to always have a bag of Skittles or Starbursts to keep their energy levels and excitement up," Parsons, who traded his sticks for a snowboard at age 11, says. "The kids all randomly stop and open their mouths for a 'power up.' " Riding solo, Parsons counts among his most challenging achievements boarding Crested Butte's Rambo, one of the steepest lift-accessible runs in North America. (He did it switch, just for fun.)

Horjus vouches for both Rambo ("very Tahoe-y") and Parsons, having seen him in action during a *5280* retreat at Winter Park. "Sean is the fastest snowboarder I've ever had the pleasure of riding with," Horjus says. "He transitions while moving." When I asked her to critique my form on the same trip, her feedback was more measured: "You're a little in the backseat." Luckily for me, everyone is equal at après, which is one of two areas where Horjus says Colorado has California beat. The other? Our pillowy, low-water-content powder. "It's so much easier to learn, and enjoy learning, on soft snow, especially with the promise of good food and drink at the end," Horjus says. Keep your tips up, and we'll see you out there.

JESSICA LaRUSSO
Editor-in-Chief

jessica@5280.com

PAUL KAROLYI
Freelance Writer

For years, Paul Karolyi had watched as the political clout of DoBetterDNVR—the anonymous social media profile deploying crowdsourced images of homelessness and public drug use to launch withering attacks against Mayor Mike Johnston and the Denver Police Department—rose alongside its follower count. "Everyone has opinions about the account, but no one wants to talk about it on the record," says Karolyi, the senior executive producer of *City Cast Denver*, a daily news podcast. **"It was whispers, speculation. Who is DoBetterDNVR? Little did we know, the real story hadn't even started yet."** While Karolyi reported his deep dive into DoBetterDNVR ("Antisocial Behavior," page 30), the account's administrator abruptly removed their profiles from Instagram and X—only to restore them two weeks later, promising to engage in more respectful, constructive discourse about the issues facing our city. "Because of the controversy around past coverage of DoBetterDNVR, every one of my sources was hesitant," Karolyi says. "There were fears of doxxing. There were fears of adding fuel to DoBetterDNVR's fire. All understandable, and I appreciate their participation in an effort to help all of us understand our city better."

From top: Sam Ferguson/Courtesy of Aspen Skiing Company; Courtesy of Nick Holmby/Dude IDK

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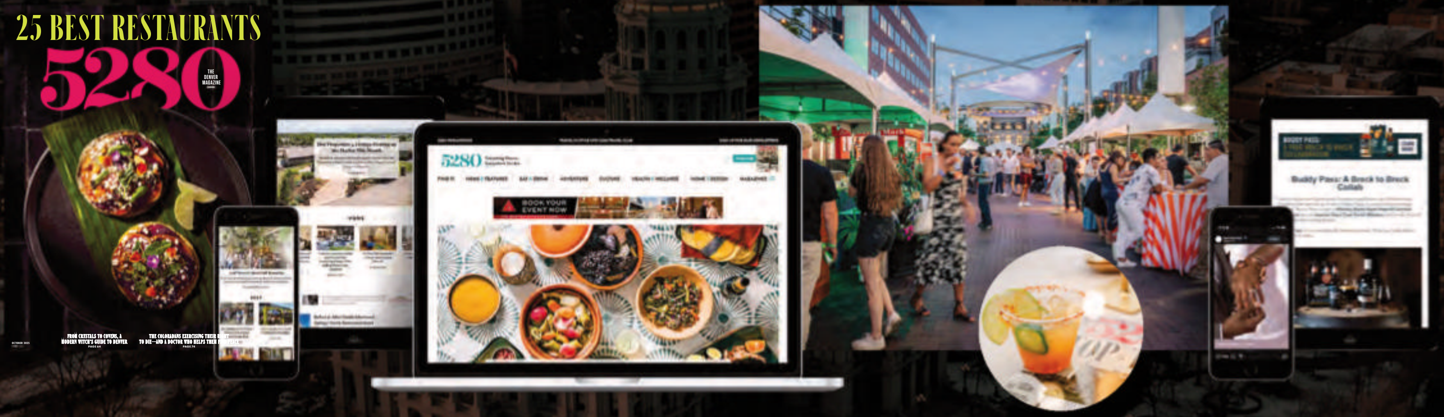
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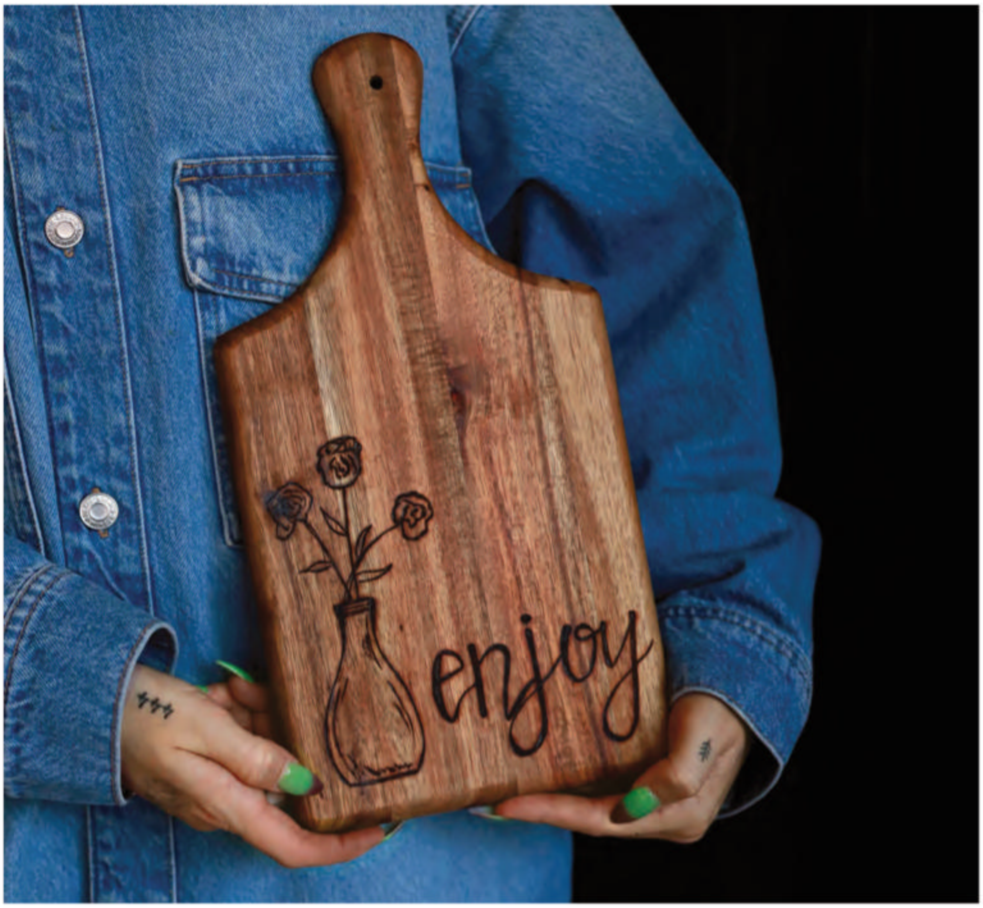
Home For The Holiday

Colorado's favorite daughter—or at least its fastest one—can sleep in her own bed this Thanksgiving. Vail's Mikaela Shiffrin will headline the Stifel Copper Cup at Copper Mountain, from November 27 to 30, after the women's FIS Ski World Cup circuit was forced to skip its usual stop in Killington, Vermont (the resort is replacing a lift). Copper quickly seized the opportunity to host its first top-flight alpine competition since 2001. It even expanded the scope by inviting boys; like a middle-school dance, World Cup events are typically separated by sex. Not so at Copper, where men, including River Radamus of Edwards, will compete during the first two days in the super G and giant slalom. Shiffrin and the women then take center stage with giant slalom and slalom. Beyond serving as a homecoming for Shiffrin and Radamus, Copper is also the U.S. Ski Team's official training center. That means the Stars and Stripes should be well positioned for a gold rush, a hopeful harbinger of things to come this February at the 2026 Winter Olympics in Italy. *$25 for daily general admission, $85 for all four days; $40 for daily premium ticket, $125 for all four days* –**SPENCER CAMPBELL**

Harry How/Getty Images



Outside The Box

Nothing cuts through stacks of gift-wrapped Amazon boxes like a holiday present you made with your own hands. If your crafting skills never evolved past popsicle sticks, don't worry: Denver is home to dozens of workshops where the pros can help you create something truly unique to slip under the tree. —ROSE CAHALAN

A wood-burned charcuterie board from Fleur

Wood-Burned Charcuterie Boards at Fleur

BEST FOR: **MARTHA STEWART ASPIRANTS**

Make the culinary creative in your life a canvas that accentuates their ingenuity at Fleur in the Speer neighborhood. This two-hour workshop ($100) will lead participants through the basics of wood burning—also called pyrography—using a heated pen. A cutting board is provided, and though students can arrive with a design in mind, teachers are always willing to help brainstorm. *November 4 at 6 p.m., November 9 at 1 p.m., December 11 at 5:30 p.m., December 14 (ornament-burning class) at 1 p.m.; 13 E. Fourth Ave.*

Traditional Batik Painting at the Denver Art Gym

BEST FOR: **YOUR HIPPIE STEPMOM**

Swap a paintbrush for a penlike tool called a tjanting when Angela Leong, who studied in Singapore and Malaysia, teaches you the ancient art of batik, an Indonesian dying technique that uses wax to create vibrant designs. Like many of the classes at Montclair's Denver Art Gym—which also offers low-cost studio and gallery space for local creatives—this workshop is on the affordable side, at $65. *November 9 from 1 to 4 p.m.; 1460 Leyden St.*

Stained Glass Nightlights at Denver Botanic Gardens

BEST FOR: **YOUR NYCTOPHOBIC NIECE**

The learning curve for stained glass can be steep, especially when it comes to scoring and cutting shards into the right shape. Skip that step with this beginner-friendly workshop at the Denver Botanic Gardens ($155, or $145 for members), where students will use a soldering iron to piece together one of five precut, whimsical garden designs, such as a snail or butterfly. *December 13 from 9:30 a.m. to noon or 1 to 3:30 p.m.; 1007 York St.*

String Art at Inks & Drinks

BEST FOR: **YOUR BROTHER BACK EAST**

These mesmerizing geometric patterns ($25 to $45), made by winding string around nails hammered into a board, are hard to mess up—good news for those who prefer to craft while sipping a cocktail or two from the full bar at Westminster's Inks & Drinks. Bring your own design or choose from a range of preprinted templates, such as an elephant, monstera leaf, or our state flag (a perfect choice for the homesick Colorado expat on your list). *Open studio (reservations are recommended) from noon to 9 p.m., Wednesday through Sunday; 8920 Westminster Blvd., Westminster*

Floral Centerpieces at the Perfect Petal

BEST FOR: **FRIENDSGIVING HOSTS**

Instead of yet another sweet potato casserole, why not bring a lush display to the Thanksgiving table? During a two-hour tutorial, an instructor at this 30-year-old floral studio and gift shop in West Highland will teach you how to arrange an autumnal showstopper with seasonal stems. You can also sign up to make a winter wreath or evergreen centerpiece on December 6 or 19, respectively; each class is $150. *November 22 at 10:30 a.m.; 3600 W. 32nd Ave.*

Clockwise from top left: Courtesy of Fleur; Courtesy of Meggy Wilm/Colorado Glass Works; Courtesy of the Perfect Petal

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It's Electric!

E-bike tax credits will shrink next year, making this the perfect time to invest in extra pedal power.

If it seems like the e-bike fad exploded on area streets and trails in recent years, well, it did—but not by accident. Launched in August 2023, Colorado's e-bike rebate program reached as high as $1,100 and helped nearly 8,000 residents replace short car trips with two-wheel, battery-powered excursions by April 2024. That's when the state switched gears to one $450 point-of-sale tax credit, which was good for one bike per person, per year. But in 2026, that's getting slashed—along with other green-energy incentives—due to sagging state budget forecasts. Starting January 1, residents will only be eligible for a $225 tax credit. So, if you want to electrify your riding experience and benefit from more of the state's generosity, consider this the eleventh hour. These four tips from local experts will help you find the right steed for your needs. –**JAY BOUCHARD**

1. Know Thyself
"Be like the Spice Girls. Know what you want—what you really, really want," says Mark Bendele, an avid e-biker and sales manager at eBikes USA in Valverde. Understanding how you're going to use the bike is essential: If you're going to haul kids, for example, you'll want to ask about a long, comfortable back bench. Commuters should prioritize weight, especially if you'll be carrying your rig up stairs, while more recreational gravel riders should look for longer-range batteries and durable tires. In Denver, Class 1 and 2 e-bikes are permitted on most bike paths. For both, the electric assistance cuts out once you top 20 mph; the latter includes a throttle.

2. Take A Spin
"If you're a first-time buyer, sizing is really important. Most shops do in-person test rides, so take advantage of those," says Selene Perez, a Denver-based e-bike influencer better known as Electrified Latina on YouTube. It's not just about fit, but also feel. (The pedal assist on bikes with cadence sensors might feel jerky, for example, while those with torque sensors will feel more natural.) Plus, wheel sizes vary, as do frame shapes and handlebars. Trying out various saddles is essential to finding your perfect long-term ride.

3. Don't Overspend
To a degree, more expensive e-bikes are better made, but Bendele says the sweet spot for price and quality at eBikes USA is between $1,700 and $3,000. Although you may be able to find a new e-bike at some retailers for less than $1,000, you'll need to do careful research to make sure it's a sturdy machine. "If you think you're going to get a unicorn bike for $999, you're going to be very unhappy," he says. "But if you just want a commuter, you don't need to spend $7,000."

4. Shop Local
Yes, you can purchase an e-bike online and still get your Colorado tax credit, but many local stores offer better warranties and will kick in a free tune-up or discounted labor for ongoing maintenance. (Plus, e-bike startups that seem too good to be true probably are—and might be out of business when you need a replacement part.) Lots of traditional bike shops now carry electric models, too. For showrooms dedicated to battery-powered rides, check out Berkeley's eForce Electric Bikes, Elevated E-Bikes in Arvada, or FuturE-Bikes in Broomfield, in addition to eBikes USA.

Source photos: Getty Images

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY SEAN PARSONS

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^ Enas Alsharea inside her shop in Superior

Common Threads

In 2014, Enas Alsharea fled her home in Baghdad as threats to her safety became imminent. She settled in Colorado as a refugee and eventually became an assistant professor at the University of Colorado Anschutz School of Nursing. But before her 40th birthday in 2023, Alsharea made a wish: to go home. "I didn't know what I was missing," Alsharea says. "The art felt very alive. The city was very vibrant. The colors, the spices…I wanted to bring that vibrancy to the United States." Two years later, Alsharea opened Innana Creations, a rug shop in Superior that specializes in custom and vintage weavings from the Middle East. Here, Alsharea shares how the business has changed her perspective on community. –MICHELLE SHORTALL

5280: The Middle East produces an array of beautiful objects. Why did you choose rugs?

Enas Alsharea: I feel really connected to the weaving process—the slowness of it, the art, the colors, the story that it tells, the women who make the rugs in their homes. [Opening this shop] has also brought up so many aspects of me. Part of it is nostalgia for my roots, but it's also about my journey here in the United States. When I first arrived, I wanted to assimilate and become like everyone else. With time, I learned my identity—a different perspective, belief system, language, upbringing—can also be celebrated and cherished, like the patterns and contrasting colors in a rug.

You sell both custom and one-off rugs. Where do they come from?

Ninety-nine percent of the weavers in the Middle East are women who live in villages. Typically, they're commissioned to start a rug, and once finished, those rugs are taken by men who have access to the city, to the tourists, to different languages, to spaces where they can sell the rugs at a higher price. The weavers still get paid, but not enough for the art they produce. I source directly from women weavers. My goal is to empower them and show them that their pieces are so valuable in the world. I can pay them way higher than the pennies they're making, and they don't have to travel to big cities to earn fair wages.

How did you meet these women?

I started going to faraway villages in Turkey, Morocco, and Iraq. In Baghdad, I hired a taxi and traveled for hours to a small village, where a weaver hosted me in her home and showed me her very primitive loom. She would look at a design, focus on it for 15 seconds, and then start weaving. No pattern, no numbers, no measurements. She's never been to school; she's illiterate, so we communicate over voice notes. I saw the power and talent in her, and I just wanted to support her.

Fostering connection seems like your overarching mission.

I don't sell my items online even though I have been asked to many times. I want people to come to the shop and look and feel and connect and have a conversation with me. I want them to learn about the weavers and the dyes and the weaving techniques of the piece they take home.

[Looking at a beautiful rug] connects us to parts of the world that we only see in the news—areas that are portrayed as full of suffering, war, conflict, death, darkness. Seeing beauty coming from that side of the world just gives us a different idea. When my clients come home from work and the TV is broadcasting bad news, maybe the eye will turn to the floor and see beauty.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SARAH BANKS

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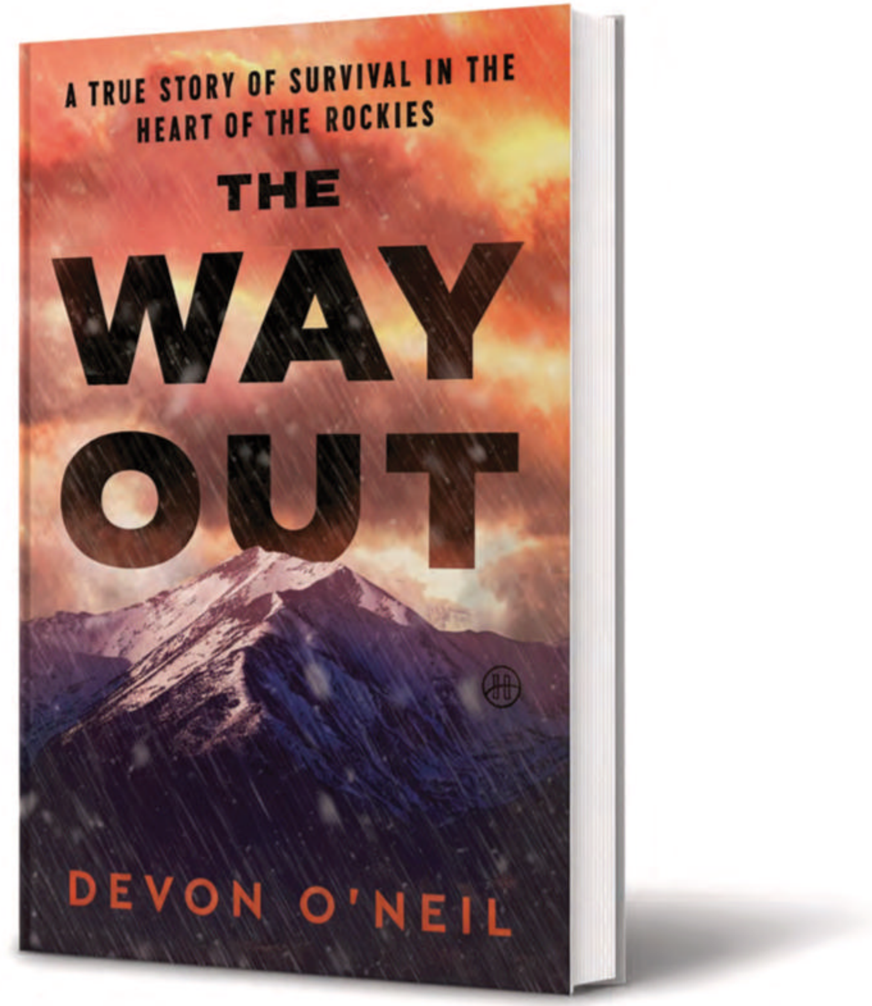

After The Storm

How a backcountry ski run turned into a tragedy for the small town of Salida.

On January 4, 2017, Brett Beasley asked Cole Walters-Schaler a question that countless powder hounds had posed before: "Wanna ski a lap?"

Beasley, a U.S. Forest Service ranger, and Walters-Schaler, a 15-year-old who was friends with Beasley's daughter, had traveled with their families from their hometown of Salida to Uncle Bud's Hut, part of the 10th Mountain Division Hut Association, near Leadville, for a backcountry skiing trip. They figured they'd take a quick spin, then meet up with the rest of their group. Instead, the pair became trapped in Porcupine Gulch during a massive snowstorm. Only one of them survived.

The loss reverberated through Salida, as friends and family tried to make sense of what happened. No one alleged foul play, but with the survivor seemingly apprehensive to divulge in-depth details about his experience, how exactly that tragic day played out remained a mystery—one that haunted Devon O'Neil after he learned about it from a friend in 2019. The Breckenridge writer spent the next six years investigating the incident. What started as a narrow look at two Coloradans lost in a blizzard grew bigger, eventually becoming *The Way Out: A True Story of Survival in the Heart of the Rockies* (set to be published by HarperOne on November 11).

O'Neil, a *5280* contributor, centers much of the account around Beasley—a consummate Colorado adventure-seeker who filled his days fishing, skiing, and dirt-biking when he wasn't serving as the safety officer for the Salida Ranger District. Considering Beasley's extensive outdoor experience, many simply refused to believe he could have been caught unprepared for the worst. O'Neil's depiction presents a man both enlivened and tortured by adventure: He never wanted to miss an opportunity to chase a thrill, but that often meant missing time with his family. "To understand the singularity of Brett Beasley," O'Neil says, "you have to see him in full."

The same goes for the Porcupine Gulch tragedy. O'Neil interviewed more than 100 of Beasley's and Walters-Schaler's friends, family members, and rescuers to find out why the search took so long to begin, how trauma gripped not only the survivor but also the town, and what actually transpired on the mountain. "That became part of my charge," O'Neil says, "so everyone knew everyone else was going through their own hell." **–SC**

CONTRIBS' PAGES

O'Neil isn't the only *5280* veteran with compelling work this year. –SC

BLOOD VINES

CHRIS WALKER
Blood Vines

Our former associate editor left the Rocky Mountains for the dewy vineyards of California to report this riveting eight-part podcast about a powerful wine-industry family drowning in fraud, murder, and White Zinfandel.

MR WILSON'S AFFAIR
ALLYSON REEDY

ALLYSON REEDY
Mrs. Wilson's Affair: A Great Gatsby Retelling

No one in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* pays much attention to Tom Buchanan's mistress. *5280* food critic Allyson Reedy remedies that by giving readers Myrtle Wilson's perspective on the Jazz Age drama.

THE HIDDEN WISDOM OF ANIMALS

KATE SIBER
The Hidden Wisdom of Animals

Inspired by the wildlife near *5280* contributor Kate Siber's Durango home, this illustrated guide for kids turns animals into life coaches: squirrels plan ahead, wolves work together, and vultures clean up.

Clockwise from top: Courtesy of HarperOne; Courtesy of Wide Eyed Editions, an imprint of The Quarto Group; Courtesy of Union Square & Co.; Courtesy of Chris Walker; Getty Images (book form)

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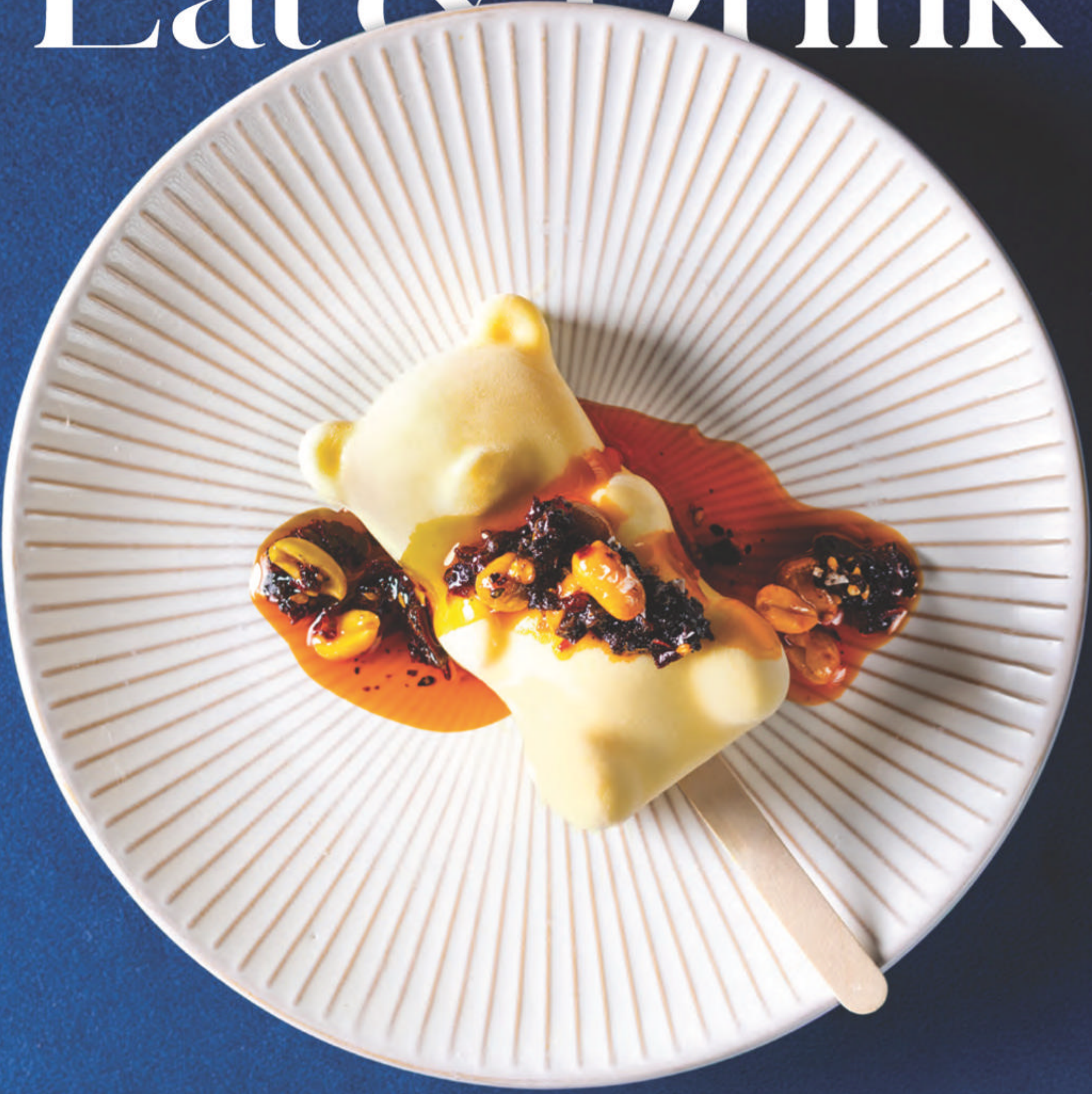
Jay Moore, artist
Roxborough State Park

Botón de traducción disponible en la página web

Eat & Drink



Animal Attraction

The name of RiNo's new subterranean eatery, BearLeek, gives only a partial hint at what the menu holds (never bear meat, sometimes leeks). The moniker actually comes from the German word for wild ramps, bärlauch. But your dinner could start with a visual that conveys meaning where the name falls short: a pudgy, short-limbed, Haribo-style bear made of butter that arrives with housemade brioche rolls. The childhood emblem evokes memories of food that can be both weird and somehow delightful. The butter is certainly that; it's blended with charred leeks (or other seasonal ingredients) so the tiny bear comes speckled with color and tastes a little savory and toasty. Later, after a smattering of small and large plates that aren't weird but rather just plain good—a homey pierogi, an elegant French onion tartlet, a sphere of Burrata with chile crisp and fennel-sesame lavash crackers—another bear appears, this time formed from passionfruit semifreddo and mounted on a popsicle stick. Most unusually, the frozen dessert is drizzled in a red slick of black garlic salsa macha. You smile and nod as your inner kid takes charge of the spoon. *2611 Walnut St.* –**MARK ANTONATION**

PHOTOGRAPH BY SARAH BANKS / STYLING BY CHARLI ORNETT

Riot Act

Riot BBQ is making a scene in Denver's Overland neighborhood with its brawl-worthy smoked meats and Mexican flavors. —ALLYSON REEDY

^ *From left:* An assortment of smoked meats and sides at Riot BBQ; owners Manny Barella and Patrick Klaiber

The Denver barbecue riot of 1898 wasn't the first time Colorado's carnivorous history veered lawless (see: cannibal Alfred Packer), but it was hopefully the last involving so much bear and possum. The trouble started when the National Stock Growers convention promised a free six-ton feast of smoked elk, buffalo, and said bear and possum to whoever lined up. When the event ran out of food, chaos ensued, with 30,000 ravenous would-be barbecue eaters throwing bones and punches, stealing cleavers, and draining beer barrels to express their ire.

That scene is the inspiration for instantly popular Riot BBQ, a counter-service spot with some chaotic history of its own. Local barbecue lovers might know that Riot took over Michelin Bib Gourmand–recognized AJ's Pit Bar-B-Q (tucked into the Overland neighborhood), which closed earlier this year because the owner failed to pay taxes. When the Colorado Department of Revenue auctioned off the smokers, picnic tables, and pretty much everything else in the building, AJ's longtime pitmaster, Patrick Klaiber, along with *Top Chef* contestant and former Bellota chef Manny Barella and hospitality veteran Caleb Benton, bought it all.

In June, they opened Riot BBQ, a smoke-bathed mashup of Texas barbecue and Mexican flavors. (To be clear, this is not Tex-Mex. It's more like a bilingual backyard rager.) The menu is full of Southern smokehouse standards such as brisket, sausage, and pulled pork, plus house creations in the pork ribs al pastor and citrus-marinated, salsa-topped chicken loco. Sides also start with the classics but include a few twists: The gooey mac and cheese is straight Southern, but

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SARAH BANKS

Pissarro's
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The Honest Eye: Camille Pissarro's Impressionism is co-organized by the Denver Art Museum and the Museum Barberini, Potsdam. It is presented by Barbara Bridges, Bridget and John Grier, the Kristin and Charles Lohmiller Exhibitions Fund, and Craig Ponzio. The exhibition is also supported by the Tom Taplin Jr. and Ted Taplin Endowment, Adolph Coors Exhibition Endowment Fund, Birnbaum Social Discourse Project, Lori and Grady Durham, Kathie and Keith Finger, Sally Cooper Murray, Ellen and Morris Susman, Lisë Gander and Andy Main, Mary Pat and Richard McCormick, Kent Thiry and Denise O'Leary, Robert Lehman Foundation, Christie's, the donors to the Annual Fund Leadership Campaign, and the residents who support the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD). Indemnity is awarded by the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities. Promotional support is provided by *5280 Magazine* and CBS Colorado.

Camille Pissarro, *The Garden of Les Mathurins, property of the Deraismes Sisters, Pontoise (Le Jardin des Mathurins, Pontoise, propriete des soeurs Deraismes)* (detail), 1876. Oil on canvas; 44 ⅝ × 65 ⅛ in.
The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri: Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust. Image courtesy akg-images / De Agostini Picture Lib. / J. E. Bulloz

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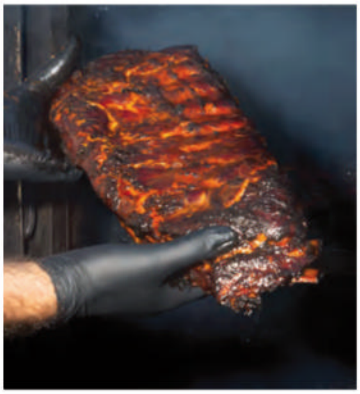
cornbread gets the esquites treatment with Cotija cheese, chunks of jalapeño, kernels of charred corn, and a gloss of charred-onion crema. There's cooling, crunchy coleslaw, but—surprise!—the dressing is nutty, peppery salsa macha.

That cornbread has been getting a lot of love on social media, but listen, I didn't drive more than 30 minutes from my home for cornbread. Only expertly smoked meats could lure me in from that distance.

It starts with the brisket, which is so tender that it falls apart if your fork so much as looks at it sideways. It's seasoned with salt, pepper, Barella's sazón blend, and a mustard binder, then smoked for at least 14 hours. Salty, tangy, and just so satisfyingly meaty, the brisket should be eaten on its own.

The ribs are great, too, but if you're expecting the advertised al pastor flavors, you'll be disappointed. The guajillos, anchos, pasillas, and pineapple in the marinade don't show up very strongly on the palate. That isn't a bad thing, though; these are still excellent, toothsome ribs. They just lean more Texan than Mexican in flavor.

Every meat I sampled at Riot was one of the best versions I've had, from the brown-sugar-sweetened pulled pork to the melty, peppery pastrami (which is wagyu, people!) to Klaiber's Texas-style sausage that he makes using brisket trimmings and bits of jalapeño and oozy cheddar. The burnt ends were gloriously charred and wondrously fatty—and yes, I ate a lot of pure fat, because the crispy, caramelized crust was just that good.



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^ *From left*: Smoked pork ribs; inside Riot BBQ; smoked wings and other meats at Roaming Buffalo Bar-B-Que

Barella uses smoked meats in a couple of prepared dishes as well. I liked the brisket quesadilla and chicken taco with avocado crema just fine, but I maintain that meats this good should be enjoyed without the interference of tortillas, avocado crema, or even the lineup of house-made sauces.

As with the 1898 National Stock Growers event, there's no guarantee that Riot BBQ won't run out of food. My advice? Go early, and unless you're with a huge group, ask for a quarter-pound of each meat you want to try, instead of the half-pound portions listed on the menu (only the pork ribs require a minimum half-pound order). This strategy maximizes variety, which should always be the goal at a barbecue joint.

The roadhouse-style restaurant is homey and comfortable inside—and anything but lawless. One employee slices the slow-smoked meats as fast as you can order while another gathers drinks, assembles tacos, and hands out sides, keeping the line moving at a steady pace.

Riot BBQ feels like the smokehouse we've been waiting for: a culmination of Denver's melting pot status for American and Mexican transplants. You won't find free possum or bear here, but Riot is already earning its spot in Colorado's barbecue history.

RIOT BBQ
2180 S. Delaware St.,
riotbbqcompany.com

The Draw: Fantastic Texas-style barbecue with Mexican flair

The Drawback: Mexican flavors could be more pronounced, especially given chef Manny Barella's talents

Noise Level: Medium

Don't Miss: Brisket, burnt ends, ribs, sausage

REGIONAL ACCENTS

Colorado-style barbecue may not be a thing, exactly, but we do have standout takes on regional specialties as well as some homegrown variations. –AR

For: CAROLINA-STYLE PULLED PORK

The regional twist at **Smokin Yard's BBQ** is the mustard-based sauce on melt-in-your mouth pork, while the new **Mama Jo's Biscuits & BBQ** dresses its pig in a tangy vinegar mop. *900 W. First Ave.; 3525 E. Colfax Ave.*

For: TEXAS-STYLE BRISKET

Just how legit is **Post Oak Barbecue**? Texas-raised pitmaster Nick Prince uses only Hill Country–sourced post oak to perfume his Prime angus brisket. For another legendary Texas-style brisket, follow the smoke to **Barbosa's Barbeque & Catering** food truck. *4000 Tennyson St.; various Denver locations*

For: COLORADO 'CUE

The closest thing to Colorado-style barbecue can be found at Rosedale's **Roaming Buffalo Bar-B-Que,** where you can bite into pulled local lamb shoulder, hefty smoked bison ribs, and venison or bison green chile cheddar sausage. And, fittingly for the eco-friendly vibes of its hometown (Boulder), mobile **Rang Tang Craft Barbecue** smokes regeneratively ranched beef and pasture-raised heritage pork. *2387 S. Downing St.; Rayback Collective, 2775 Valmont Road, Boulder (and various pop-ups)*

Noah Michael Turks/Courtesy of Roaming Buffalo Bar-B-Que (bottom right)

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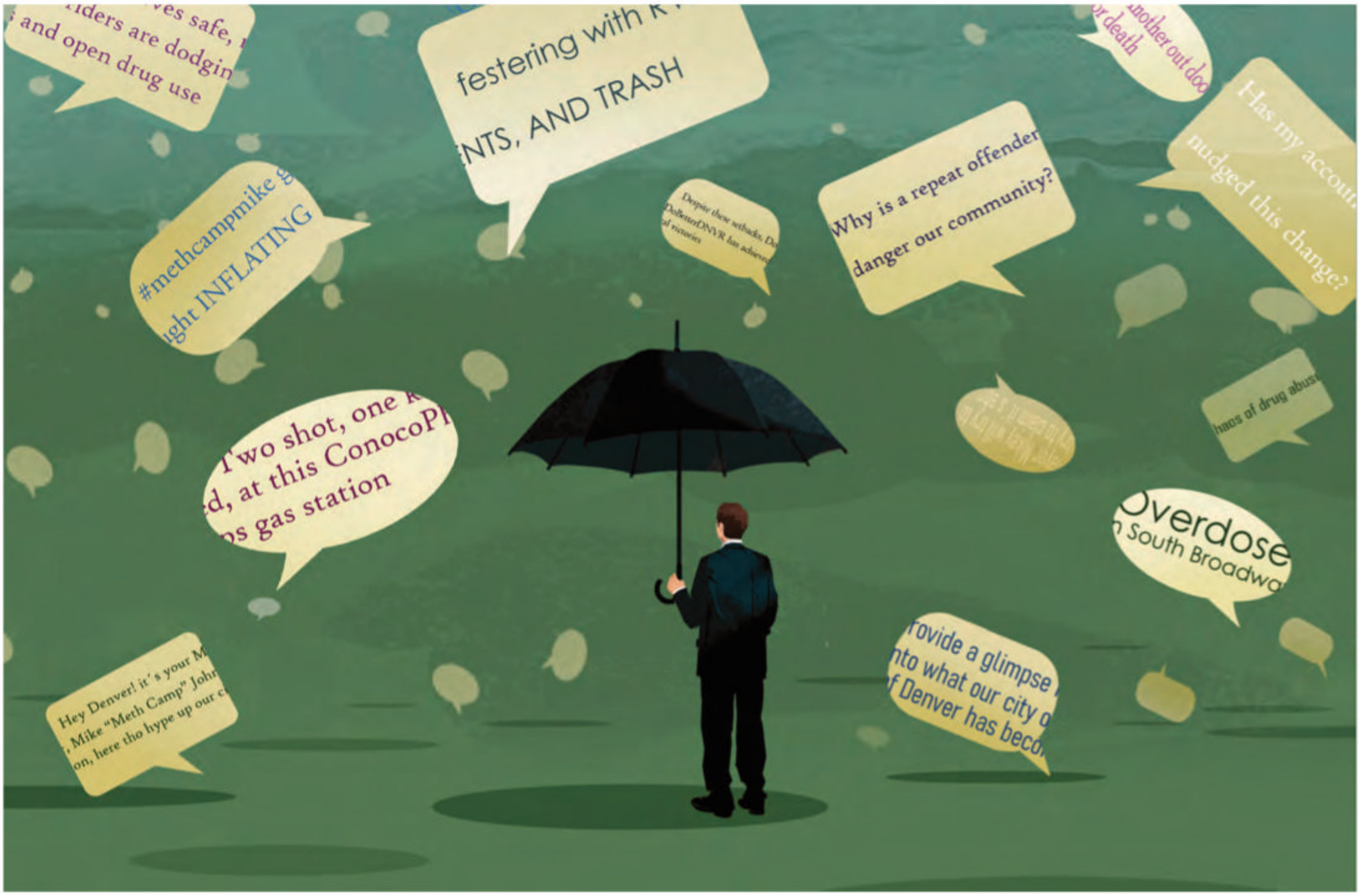
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Antisocial Behavior

From nasty memes to online dogpiles, DoBetterDNVR brought Trump-style politics to Denver. But just when the social media provocateur was poised to become a serious power broker in city politics, it vanished—only to re-emerge promising a kinder, gentler approach to agitation.

BY PAUL KAROLYI

Matt McCormick joined the St. Francis Center as an intern in 2016. He eventually became a full-time staffer for the Five Points day shelter, handing out jackets during snowstorms, helping people fill out applications for housing, and watching as apartment buildings went up and affluent neighbors moved in.

He also saw the number of people experiencing homelessness in metro Denver nearly double from 2016 to 2023, reaching 10,054. The rise led to frustration with former Mayor Michael Hancock's handling of the issue, and that year voters elected a new mayor, Mike Johnston, who promised to end unsheltered homelessness during his first term. One of his first moves was to convert the Comfort Inn on Quebec Street into a shelter for individuals and couples.

McCormick joined the St. Francis team tasked with managing the former hotel. Shortly thereafter, he noticed that an anonymous social media profile was frequently mentioning the Comfort Inn on X and Instagram. "At the end of the video you'll see a drug addict gathering in between the Meth Western and Discomfort Inn," the account posted on Instagram on October 4, 2024. "This is further proof that housing will NOT solve the drug addiction crisis that Mayor @mikejohnstonco refers to as 'homelessness.'"

The pundit called itself DoBetterDNVR and did not limit its criticism to the Comfort Inn. It used crowdsourced videos and photos to call attention to encampments ("This area is festering with RVs, tents, and trash that the city has enabled to grow unabated for months"), denounce public drug use ("Quite the scene outside of this #colfax @mcdonalds!!"), and attack Johnston ("Seems like I am a [sic] better at budgeting than the city…Or perhaps #methcampmike got caught INFLATING the budget and had to backtrack").

McCormick says he saw people he knew—both clients and co-workers—targeted by the account. He tried to ignore DoBetterDNVR, but the profile was growing fast, with about 150,000 followers on Instagram and X by July 2025. "I would check and see what they were saying," McCormick says, "which always seemed to be angry diatribes—nothing but complaints, complaints, complaints."

ILLUSTRATION BY EVA VÁZQUEZ

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So when, in August, he read that the *Denver Post* had uncovered the identities of three contributors to DoBetterDNVR—which was posting daily on Instagram and X—McCormick logged on to TikTok inside his office and hit record. "Did y'all see the *Denver Post*?" he asked with a smile. "DoBetterDNVR is evil. If you follow them, you're evil. If you contribute to them, you're evil. And if I ever, ever catch any one of y'all who have contributed, or follow, I'm fighting you."

McCormick then forgot about the post for a few days—until an account he'd never heard of called Hydra Echo posted both his address and LinkedIn profile on TikTok. DoBetterDNVR had seen his video and called on its followers to email complaints to St. Francis Center's human resources department. The shelter ultimately fired McCormick for violating the nonprofit's policy against using social media at work and for using threatening language online.

DoBetterDNVR celebrated the victory. "Perhaps [Matt] should take the blame on this one," the account crooned on X on August 6, in a post that received 1,300 likes and 237 shares. "He made a TikTok threatening violence on followers of DoBetterDNVR from his office at the shelter. BuhBye."

"I was joking," McCormick says.

DOBETTERDNVR MAY HAVE the power to marshal thousands of followers today, but its first post—an Instagram missive on June 29, 2021, that announced its intention to "provide a glimpse into what our city of Denver has become and how it is worsening by the day," accompanied by a photo of an empty Fireball shooter next to abandoned bags and clothes strewn on a sidewalk—got only nine likes.

Locals continued to ignore DoBetterDNVR until July 2023, when two changes marked a major turning point. First, newly elected Mayor Mike Johnston made homelessness his top priority. His campaign pledge to end unsheltered homelessness was an ambitious goal—one his predecessors had spent millions trying and failing to accomplish. Johnston's plan was to implement a housing-first strategy by using pandemic relief money and tax revenue from the state to either build new transitional housing units or acquire underutilized hotels. Once people were sheltered, the city could connect them with services to get them on their feet.

Second, someone new took over DoBetterDNVR, according to a 2024 *Westword* article. Previously, a collective had run the account. While contributors still provided photos and videos, both the frequency and tone of the posts changed under the new, unnamed administrator. The account rolled out Trump-style epithets, dubbing the mayor "Meth Camp

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A dedicated advocate for those harmed by the carelessness of others, Stephen Burg has a long-standing reputation for his formidable skills as a litigator and a negotiator. He has a passion for holding negligent parties accountable for their actions and maximizing financial recoveries for his clients.

Mr. Burg has been recognized for his legal excellence both nationally and locally. He was named as the "Recommended Attorney" by the U.S. Legal 500, and has been consistently recognized by the National Trial Lawyers as a "Top 100 Trial Lawyer" since 2012. He has also been selected by his peers as a Best Lawyer in America, a Colorado Super Lawyer, and a 5280 Top Lawyer.

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Mike” and another hotel-turned-shelter the “Embezzley Suites.” One video from April 2024 showed a baby crawling across a sidewalk in downtown Denver, away from its apparently oblivious mother. DoBetterDNVR also got personal. A post from earlier this year showed a photo of the mayor’s wife, Courtney Johnston, next to a picture of Gollum from *The Lord of the Rings* movies. “Courtney Johnston is lookin’ a lil rough today,” the caption read. The post attracted more than 10,000 views.

(As a producer for City Cast Denver, a daily news podcast, I’ve exchanged DMs with DoBetterDNVR over the years. It’s even come up with a nickname for our show: Shitty Cast. But the admin declined to participate in an interview for this story.)

The harsher the tone, the more visceral the videos, the more popular DoBetterDNVR became. Its combined Instagram and X followers grew from 3,000 to more than 40,000 during the first eight months of Johnston’s term, according to *Westword*.

“What I appreciated about it is this abrasive citizen journalism,” says Jeff Hunt, the former chairman of the Western Conservative Summit who co-hosts a talk radio show on 710KNUS. “You get an unfiltered view of what’s really happening in the communities you live in.” That street-level perspective is especially appealing to conservatives, says Hunt, citing a recent Gallup poll that reported only eight percent of Republicans have a “great deal” or “fair amount” of trust in traditional media.

The first post Heidi Ganahl, the Republican candidate for governor in 2022, remembers is the baby crawling away from its mother. “It just broke my heart,” Ganahl says, “and I was like, *God, I cannot get that image outta my head*.” Ganahl says she didn’t see the Gollum post; when I showed it to her, she called it “bad” and “not necessary.” In general, though, she is “rooting for DoBetterDNVR to be hard and edgy and fearless about telling these stories.”

In July, DoBetterDNVR accused the mayor and police of masterminding an alleged “off the books” investigation to unmask the account. As evidence, the account posted screenshots of an open-records request made by the Denver Police Protective Association, the collective bargaining agent for officers. The DPPA had asked for internal Denver Police Department emails related to DoBetterDNVR. According to the admin, the search turned up 4,356 relevant messages. Their contents remain a mystery (no one, it seems, is willing to pay the $5,951 the DPD requires to process the emails, and the DPPA did not respond to *5280*’s interview request). The DPD and mayor’s office denied the allegation, but the mere perception of impropriety started a firestorm.

It began with a few anonymous accounts picking up the conspiracy. After DoBetterDNVR alleged that the *Denver Post* was in on the plot and working on a story that would out DoBetterDNVR’s identity, Ganahl, Hunt, and other local conservative leaders joined in, too, posting the message, “I am DoBetterDNVR.” (In the 1960 film *Spartacus*, the title character’s followers prevent their leader from being identified by shouting, “I am Spartacus!”)

Hunt admits he never saw a “smoking gun” of evidence for the scheme, only “a lot of smoke.” Little of it cleared after the *Post* published its story on August 1. Reporter Shelly Bradbury was able to identify three contributors to DoBetterDNVR by connecting open-records requests they’d made to information that later showed up on one of its accounts. All three denied being the admin. A person purporting to be the admin then gave a few anonymous interviews to conservative publications, claiming their identity was still secret.

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"I really do think the fact that they are anonymous is better than if we knew who it was," says Valdamar Archuleta, a Republican who ran unsuccessfully for Denver's congressional seat in 2024 and participated in the "I am DoBetterDNVR" crusade. "Without being able to put it on one person or two, it becomes the voice of a movement."

YOU'D EXPECT CONSERVATIVES like Hunt and Ganahl to support a vocal critic of Denver's Democratic mayor, but DoBetterDNVR's power seems to come from an ability to tap into a vein of shared discontent.

Ted Trimpa is one of the state's most celebrated Democratic strategists; he advocated effectively for the national legalization of gay marriage and helped the Democrats achieve a majority in the Colorado Legislature in 2004 and 2006. A few years ago, he relocated to a luxury apartment downtown, after his husband moved to New York City to take a job with Fox News. "My MAGA husband will forward me [DoBetterDNVR] posts to say, *See, I told you so. Democratic mayor in a Democratic city, and this is what happens*," Trimpa says, looking out his window over Union Station. "To which I just roll my eyes."

But Trimpa concedes that DoBetterDNVR isn't necessarily wrong—they just depict a distorted, mostly outdated view of the truth, he says. "Were there people shooting up outside my building when I first moved down here?" Trimpa says. "Yes, I saw it, but I also didn't look around and say, 'Oh, my God, that's what all of this neighborhood is about.'"

Trimpa thinks the mayor has made enormous progress downtown since then, and at least some data points support that. During his State of the City address this past July, Johnston pointed to a 45 percent drop in unsheltered homelessness during his tenure. The Urban Institute recently reported that the mayor's efforts have effectively reduced the number of encampments with 20 or more people by 98 percent. Denver's homicide rate fell 45 percent through July 2025 compared to the first six months of the previous year. Car thefts were down 46 percent. Johnston acknowledges that he has not ended unsheltered homelessness in Denver, but he believes these statistical leaps are milestones on the road to a thriving city.

Rather than credit Johnston with these wins, Trimpa says, DoBetterDNVR sensationalizes grim, individual scenes. "The plural of anecdote is not data, and what they're trying to do is just that," Trimpa says. "A bunch of clips which 'prove' something." Specifically: that downtown Denver is a hellscape of crime, homelessness, and public drug use.

Johnston's depiction of the city is, of course, a bit rosier. It seems he simply can't sell his version of Denver—at least not enough to convince people that downtown is a safe place to spend their money. Earlier this year, the mayor announced a $250 million budget shortfall, citing, in part, the sluggish return of sales tax revenues following the pandemic, especially from businesses downtown. The city ordered furlough days and laid off 171 employees to help close the deficit. "It's not only on him, but at a certain level, it is [Johnston's] responsibility," Trimpa says of downtown's lackluster PR. "I personally have issues with some of the [mayor's] focus, and I think that it appears that business in downtown was not first on the list and maybe a little too far down on the list."

Johnston has recently made efforts to rectify that. Last November, he persuaded voters to expand the Downtown Development Authority, which uses tax increment financing to fund projects that will help accelerate economic

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growth. This past April, he created an office to help streamline the process for new businesses to get permits approved. At the end of May, he worked with the Downtown Denver Partnership to throw a two-day party celebrating the reopening of 16th Street following a three-year renovation.

Still, more Denverites have soured on Johnston. According to an August survey from the Colorado Polling Institute, 46 percent of eligible voters have an unfavorable view of the mayor, up from 38 percent a year ago. Their top concern? Homelessness, at 44 percent. Alex Renteria, the mayor's director of communications, is quick to point out that the same poll showed that, compared with two years ago, more voters (51 percent to 44 percent) feel Denver is headed in the right direction. "But that's fair," she says of the mayor's favorability rating. "We have more work to do to tell that story."

For Hunt, the budget shortfall shows that Denver is still too soft on crime and homelessness and too quick to spend on the wrong things. "So now you have a strong incentive to clean up the city in order to drive sales tax," Hunt says.

Sure enough, during his 2025 State of the City address, Johnston mentioned a new focus on "quality-of-life crimes—like theft or public drug use—that impact many of us on a daily basis." DPD Chief Ron Thomas later told *Denverite* that the policy shift was, in part, a recognition that these types of offenses have a large impact on "people's perceptions."

"Has my account nudged this change?" DoBetterDNVR posted on August 25. Days later, Johnston announced that, as part of his proposed budget for 2026, he planned to close two shelters, including the converted Comfort Inn that had been the object of DoBetterDNVR's ire, saving $11 million.

Renteria rejects any implication that the mayor is taking notes from DoBetterDNVR or moving in a conservative direction. She says this was always the plan. Now that fewer people are living on the streets, the mayor is simply shifting his focus to mental health services and longer-term workforce development. According to Renteria, the people still living unsheltered on Denver's streets—the group often maligned for acting strangely or saying threatening things—have refused the support offered so far. "When you're walking on the street going to lunch or with your child and you see that," Renteria says, "you're gonna feel unsafe."

CHARLIE KIRK WAS killed while speaking at a college in Utah on September 10. The assassination of the conservative activist sparked a multitude of commentary about the escalating hostility in American politics—and made DoBetterDNVR reconsider their role in it.

In mid-September, after I noticed that the admin hadn't posted in a few days, I reached out. I was curious about the pause, but I also wanted to know their thoughts on the mayor's shifts on crime and homelessness. "Mike Johnston tells people what he thinks they want to hear, which I guess these moves are a good indication of what he is hearing from voters," they responded. "Nevertheless, I sincerely doubt he is planning on doing anything to meaningfully address either issue. I hope I am wrong." They also told me they were only taking a break from social media because their real-life job had gotten too busy.

The next day, DoBetterDNVR disappeared. Conservative columnist Jimmy Sengenberger of the *Denver Gazette* posted a statement from the admin shortly thereafter, confirming that DoBetterDNVR had removed their Instagram and X profiles under their own volition and not, as some of their supporters had speculated, under threat from Johnston or the police.

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When I called Sengenberger, he mentioned a past interview during which the admin had indicated they felt unsafe. Sengenberger was also feeling unsafe after Kirk's murder: "We are in a moment where violence is a possibility."

Then, on September 25, DoBetterDNVR was back—but different. In a post explaining the two-week absence, they acknowledged they had not always been accurate or constructive and apologized for the personal attacks on Mike and Courtney Johnston. When I DM'ed them directly, the admin said Sengenberger had been right: "Charlie's assassination really impacted me and I had to weigh the risks on my personal safety vs. benefit of keeping the accounts.... Ultimately, you can see what I picked but going forwards, I am not going to play a part in the unnecessary divisiveness and hostility." They wrote that they planned to retire derogatory epithets, including Meth Camp Mike.

An hour later, they changed their mind. "Name-calling can sometimes be effective to emphasize a point," they told me.

One person DoBetterDNVR isn't going to apologize to is McCormick. "I hope Matt is doing well," the admin wrote to me, "and that he's learned a valuable lesson from the ordeal: to never threaten violence against anyone."

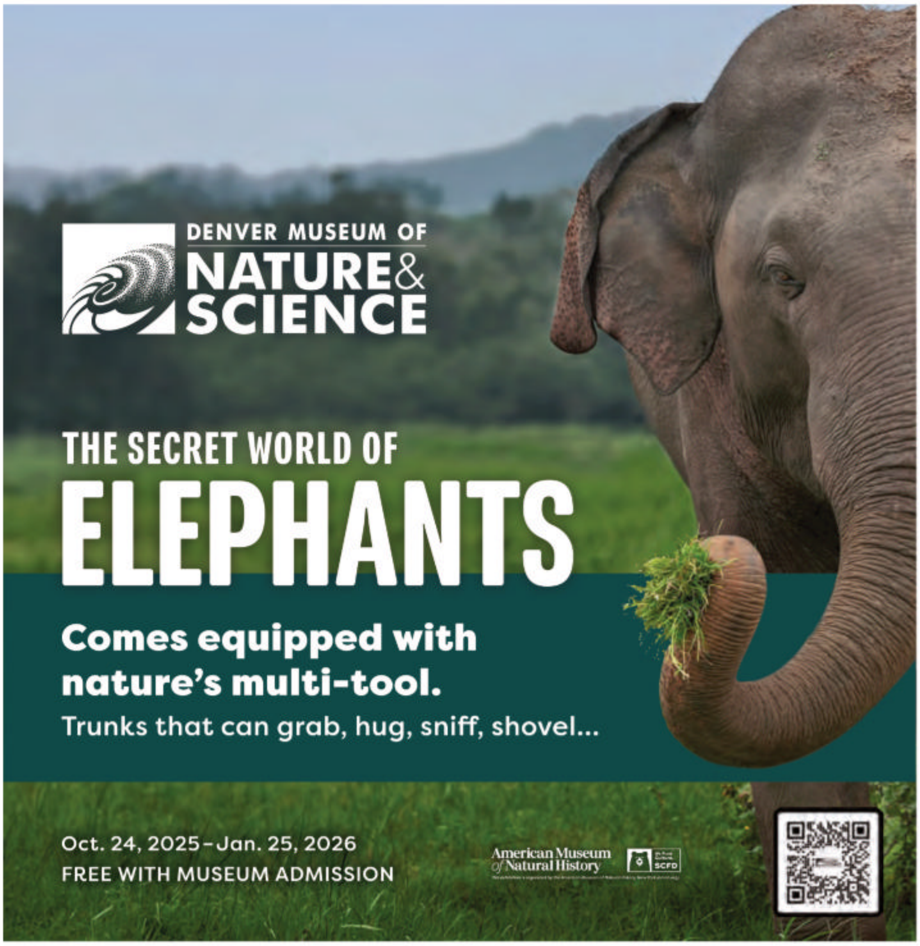
When I spoke to McCormick this fall, he was taking time to reflect. He welcomes DoBetterDNVR's rebrand—if the admin is interested in having a real conversation about solutions without denigrating people. McCormick wants to be a part of that work; he plans to launch his own social-services-focused communications agency. "That way," he says, "the next time I get doxxed, I can't get fired."

Many DoBetterDNVR followers were suspicious of its more diplomatic approach. "Yo what? Never thought this page would be censored/intimated [sic] by our local government," one wrote. But the account's posts following its re-emergence didn't appear much different. There was a photo of a man using drugs, for example, accompanied by an argument against the Vibrant Denver bond package, which, if passed this month, would approve $950 million in debt for maintenance and infrastructure projects.

Conservative radio host Mandy Connell, who once cheered the account's attacks on Johnston, says she sees a difference in tone and likes the new direction. "When you realize that if someone killed you there would be a certain percentage of the population that would be overjoyed, it's sobering," Connell says.

"Oddly," she adds, "I think [DoBetterDNVR] really wants to do better." ▲

Paul Karolyi is the senior executive producer of City Cast Denver. Send feedback to letters@5280.com.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Can you really celebrate without food? (Seems almost illegal.) Good thing you have plenty of diverse and delectable options. From Korean delicacies at **Tofu Story** to the rich, Indian flavors of **Monsoon**, everything is on the table.

'Tis the season for getting cozy. **Glissade Coffee** offers globally inspired hot beverages, and **Denver Biscuit Company** provides comfort food with a local twist. You can also pick up grab-and-go gourmet bites at **Parkside Eatery**.

Let It Snow

A winter trip to Aurora isn't complete without outdoor adventures. Burn off those holiday treats and immerse yourself in a true winter wonderland. Rent cross-country skis from **Epic Mountain Gear** to fully enjoy **Cherry Creek State Park**, or go for a winter hike at **Aurora Reservoir**. And take the kids sledding at **Sagebrush Park** or **Olympic Park** for those classic holiday memories.

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New West's Cherry Creek shop resembles an art gallery, showcasing their latest handforged hunting knives and custom kitchen blocks. Guests can also enjoy the thrill of tomahawk throwing in the space's "Mtn Man Toy Shop," adding a playful Western twist to the luxury shopping experience. Get ready for the holidays, and bring your favorite knives to get sharpened while you shop for American-made gifts sure to leave a lasting impression.

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5280 SCENE CALENDAR

NOV 8

Free Night at the Museums

Throughout Denver
5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Ready for a night worth a thousand stories? On Saturday, November 8, 20 of Denver's best museums will stay open late from 5–10 p.m. with free admission and free shuttles running all night long.

Information and tickets at denverartsweek.com.

NOV 14

World Diabetes Day with the Children's Diabetes Foundation

Denver Union Station • 11:00 a.m.

Celebrate Diabetes Awareness Month this November! Join us on World Diabetes Day, November 14, for a brief program and free on-site ASK Screening for type 1 diabetes and celiac disease. Wear blue to support this year's theme: Diabaddies & Diabuddies.

Information and tickets at childrensdiabetesfoundation.org/events.

NOV 15

Chili, Booze, & Brews

The Arch, Denver
6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

A can't-miss food-and-beverage competition featuring Colorado craft breweries, small-batch distilleries, home-grown hot sauce companies, and chefs from local Denver restaurants. Plus, a performance from Colorado's own Hazel Miller! All to bring the heat and the hope for kids with cancer!

Information and tickets at chiliboozeandbrews.com.

NOV 27

52nd Annual Mile High United Way Turkey Trot

Washington Park, Denver • 9:00 a.m.

Join Mile High United Way for Denver's greatest Thanksgiving tradition! This 4-mile race directly helps kids begin school ready to succeed, connects young adults to education and workforce development, and ensures families can meet their basic needs.

Information and tickets at unitedwaydenver.org/turkeytrot.

DEC 6

9NEWS Parade of Lights

Downtown Denver • 6:00 p.m.

The 9NEWS Parade of Lights, proudly produced by the Downtown Denver Partnership, will return on December 6, 2025! This beloved holiday tradition will once again light up Downtown Denver with more than 40 dazzling floats, giant balloons, marching bands, equestrian units, cultural displays, and special guest appearances from Major Waddles the penguin and Santa himself.

Information and tickets at winterindenver.com/parade.

JAN 10

National Western Stock Show

National Western Complex, Denver
January 10-25, 2026

The West isn't just a place, it's a feeling. This January, the National Western Stock Show, presented by CommonSpirit Health, brings the heart of the West to Denver. Saddle up for 16 days of rodeo action, family fun, and championship livestock.

Information and tickets at nationalwestern.com.

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BY COURTNEY HOLDEN AND MAREN HORJUS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SERGE SEIDLITZ

COLORADO

SKIING—OK, SNOWBOARDING, TOO—IS DIFFERENT.

In the Rockies, the snow is less precipitation than it is frozen air sent from the heavens. Bald ridgelines sparkle under bluebird skies, spilling into never-ending aspen glades. Massive bowls look like God took an ice cream scoop to the flank of a 12,000-foot peak. Ribbons of white sluice across evergreen forests, leading to lodges that serve hot cocoa and double IPAs. Here, winter isn't endured—it's exalted.

The challenge for locals, then, is where to spend their OOO days and hard-earned dollars. Colorado boasts two dozen ski resorts and a handful of smaller municipal hills, each with its own vibe. Some shine as family-friendly playgrounds for learning and growing a love for the sport. Some impress with their stomach-dropping chutes and cliffs. Some are blessedly *anti*-resort. The right mountain for you depends on your crew, your style, and, yes, the pass you're carrying.

That's where this guide comes in. On the following pages, you'll find an introduction to Colorado's major ski areas: what each one does best, our favorite amenities and extras, and, of course, which run to try for a quintessential taste. It's time to find your winter match.

SKI RUN RATINGS

● Beginner	◆ Advanced
■ Intermediate	◆◆ Expert

BUTTERMILK

Town: Aspen
Distance from Denver: 160 miles
Pass: Aspen Snowmass, Colorado Ski Country USA (CSCUSA), Ikon, Mountain Collective

Of the Aspen foursome, Buttermilk alone is tailor-made for skiers who prefer their turns without tears. Three-quarters of the terrain is designated beginner and intermediate, with flowy, low-angle greens on one side of the mountain and black diamonds on the other—and a gigantic play structure called Fort Frog in the middle. Send groms to the insanely cool Hideout children's center (it has a craft room) before a lesson, then rendezvous after on ■ **Buckskin**, "which is fun to rip if you know what you're doing but mild enough for learners ready to upgrade," says Carbondale guidebook author Heather Balogh Rochfort.

WOLF CREEK SKI AREA

Town: Pagosa Springs
Distance from Denver: 251 miles
Pass: None

Wolf Creek is a powder paradise, where storms from the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico funnel into north- and northeastern-facing slopes, delivering an average of 430 inches annually. Expert and advanced terrain off the Alberta lift holds soft snow deep into spring, while ■ **Navajo Trail**, a two-mile-long run accessed from the Treasure Stoke or D. Boyce lifts, rolls along the perimeter of the big-view Boundary Bowl and threads through open aspen glades. The village and amenities are simple, but every trail maximizes carving time over waiting in a lift line—a major perk at Colorado's snowiest resort.

Previous spread: Courtesy of Copper Mountain. This spread, from left: Courtesy of Steamboat Ski Resort; Katie Young/Courtesy of Keystone Resort

KEYSTONE RESORT

Town: Keystone
Distance from Denver: 72 miles
Pass: Epic

Like its Epic brethren, Keystone caters to families, but it stands out for its logical layout (beginners won't accidentally wander into expert terrain), daycare for children as young as six months, and kid-focused trails, such as ● **Schoolmarm**. A continuous, 3.5-mile descent from the top of Dercum Mountain (where there's a snow fort!), it has a gentle and consistent pitch and passes three adventure zones where newbies can explore tunnels, embankments, and uninterrupted turns en route to the base area.

FUEL UP

Clop over to Goodz Tavern at Kindred Resort—that brand-spankin'-new complex in River Run Village—for a patio après of slow-cooked meats.

ARAPAHOE BASIN

Town: Dillon
Distance from Denver: 68 miles
Pass: CSCUSA, Ikon

If you measure ski days in vertical feet, no-frills Arapahoe Basin is the holy grail of grit. Nearly three-quarters of the ski area is the purview of expert riders, who bicker about which flume is best over beers at parking lot tailgates. One thing they agree on: The Pallavicini Lift services some of the state's finest in-bounds terrain from a base area. Decide for yourself on ◆◆ **Pali Cornice**, where a shooting gallery of steeps spills into a mogul field on lower Main Street.

ASPEN MOUNTAIN

Town: Aspen
Distance from Denver: 160 miles
Pass: Aspen Snowmass, CSCUSA, Ikon, Mountain Collective

Known as Ajax to locals, Aspen Mountain is where Colorado's ski scene struts its stuff. Sure, you'll spot fur-trimmed parkas and gold lamé suits gliding into the gondola, but beneath the glitz is a mountain built for skiers who crave a challenge: There are zero green runs here. Chase glory in the ◆◆ **Dumps**, a series of east-facing chutes off the FIS chair. Each pitch is split by stands of trees, creating a fun rhythm of powder fields and tight glades that hold snow well after the last storm.

FUEL UP
Hit Stranahan's Whiskey Lodge, a short walk from the Silver Queen Gondola, for a pretzel hot pocket filled with whiskey-smoked brisket.

This spread, from left: Courtesy of Arapahoe Basin; Courtesy of Monarch Mountain

MONARCH MOUNTAIN

Town: Salida
Distance from Denver: 125 miles
Pass: CSCUSA

Many things—like the addition of a lodge and tubing and terrain parks—have changed since Monarch Mountain opened in 1939. Its old-school vibe, however, has not. There's no snowmaking (with 350 inches of white stuff annually, who needs it?), and all chairlifts are fixed-grip (translation: slow and ideal for catching up with a pal between runs). The 1,146-acre ski area west of Salida along the Continental Divide remains committed to one thing: "It's all about the skiing," says director of mountain operations Scott Pressly. "It's about getting up on the hill with your family or friends and having a good time."

This season, however, guests will have an additional 377 acres to explore. With the grand opening of No Name Basin (*pictured*), which gets its non-name from the creek below, Monarch adds a lift that services 12 intermediate and expert runs on the western side of the Divide, formerly accessible only to cat-skiing ticket holders. The expansion, which took more than a decade and cost millions, also includes a warming hut and vault toilets.

The acreage spans a wide range of steep groomers and playful glades. Skiers and riders who find joy in carving down vertigo-inducing headwalls shouldn't miss ■ **Bonanza**, which falls off the basin's northern flank. Bump-lovers will appreciate the ungroomed moguls and steep transition of ◆ **Buckhorn**, located directly below the new Tomichi lift, a fixed-grip triple. Tree skiers: Head far right into ◆ **Sunset Glades**.

It may be tempting to fix your gaze on the powder below your planks. Instead, revel in the panorama west to the Gunnison River Valley, San Juan and West Elk mountains, and maw of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison. "Getting on the west side and having that experience of nature and not all of those other distractions that the modern world brings to us," Pressly says, "it's going to be that moment of Zen."

SUNLIGHT MOUNTAIN RESORT

Town: Glenwood Springs
Distance from Denver: 169 miles
Pass: CSCUSA, Indy

Sunlight is the locals' alternative to Aspen: small, family-friendly, affordable (day passes hover around $75), and refreshingly unpretentious. One knock on the place has been its hella slow, 50-plus-year-old lifts. That changes this season, with two of its three chairs being replaced. Catch a ride up the new Primo lift, now a fixed-grip quad, to steer the family down ● **The Parks**. The mellow cruiser falls off the 9,895-foot Compass Peak summit with in-your-face vistas of the Roaring Fork Valley and picturesque Mt. Sopris, an almost-thirteener that rises above Carbondale.

COPPER MOUNTAIN

Town: Frisco
Distance from Denver: 75 miles
Pass: CSCUSA, Ikon

Few ski resorts are laid out in such a beautifully straightforward manner as Copper Mountain. Beginners get their ski legs on pristinely groomed greens like Prospector and Roundabout, accessed from West Village. Intermediates head to Center Village for a boost in steepness on Copperopolis and its blue brethren. And experts keen to feel a rush open the throttle down ■ **Oh-No** to ◆ **Rosi's Run** from East Village. "Skiing [Rosi's] under Super Bee is where I learned how to ski fast," says professional skier Kyle Negomir, who will return to his favorite trail this November as he vies for glory at the 2025 Stifel Copper Cup (see page 15), part of the FIS World Cup tour.

BRECKENRIDGE SKI RESORT

Town: Breckenridge
Distance from Denver: 80 miles
Pass: Epic

Nearly a third of Breckenridge, which sprawls across five peaks in the Tenmile Range, is designated for intermediates. Coupled with a lively base area and a downtown where hard plastic boots count as dress shoes, it's catnip for Front Range skiers. True, Breck is the busiest ski resort in Colorado. To escape the fray, ride the Imperial chair, the highest lift in North America, to 12,840 feet. Skate skier's right to pick a line down ◆◆ **Whale's Tale** and link up with ■ **Northstar** for a never-ending run that will make your ears pop. Showoffs: Tack on a short bootpack from Imperial to send ◆◆ **Wacky's**, a butt-puckering Lake Chutes line in full view of the lift.

SKI COOPER

Town: Leadville
Distance from Denver: 109 miles
Pass: CSCUSA

Ski Cooper may not boast the acreage of its Epic or Ikon neighbors, but what it lacks in size it makes up for in retro charm. Nab a ticket (often less than $50 on weekdays) and putter up the 10th Mountain double chair to scout for fresh corduroy: Cooper rotates its grooming schedule to keep trails soft. Bury your edges into ■ **Trail's End**, a flowy lap along a lodgepole forest near the boundary, or, if temps plummet, try ■ **Vendome Burn**, a sun-splashed spine off the 11,757-foot summit.

BEAVER CREEK RESORT

Town: Beaver Creek
Distance from Denver: 100 miles
Pass: Epic

Most ski areas front-load beginner terrain near the base. But at Beaver Creek, half a dozen green runs pour off the resort's 11,440-foot high point, gifting first-timers rare above-treeline vistas of Colorado's serrated skyline, stretching south to 14,007-foot Mt. of the Holy Cross. Snap a summit selfie, then link ● **Red Buffalo**, a mellow cruiser along the Stone Creek drainage, with ● **Cinch** for a five-plus-mile route—one of the state's longest top-to-bottom beginner routes.

POWDERHORN MOUNTAIN RESORT

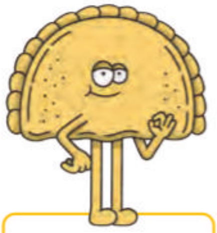
Town: Mesa
Distance from Denver: 233 miles
Pass: CSCUSA, Indy

Powderhorn is about as unpretentious as Colorado skiing gets. It's a locals' hill at heart—one that happens to be perched on the slopes of the largest flattop mountain in the world. And schussing down the Grand Mesa should be on every skier's bucket list: Drop into ■ **Maverick**, a seemingly endless roller on the front face, to look out across the Western Slope, where the horizon glows with red-rock cliffs and desert canyons. It's skiing with a Wild West twist.

SNOWMASS

Town: Snowmass Village
Distance from Denver: 160 miles
Pass: Aspen Snowmass, CSCUSA, Ikon, Mountain Collective

The closest thing to a truly self-contained ski resort among Aspen's four mountains, Snowmass (the largest at 3,300-plus acres) has a lively village and terrain for every ability. Such a distinction makes it a good choice for family getaways and group trips. Rally your crew for a lap down ■ **Sneaky's**, a groomed roller coaster that hugs the resort's edge, offering views of the Roaring Fork Valley and ample opportunities to duck into ◆ **Sneaky's Glades** for a sample of Aspen's ballyhooed low-angle tree skiing.



FUEL UP
Load your pockets with handhelds from the new SnacFood Empanadas hut, which debuted on the Snowmass Mall this summer.

ASPEN HIGHLANDS

Town: Aspen
Distance from Denver: 160 miles
Pass: Aspen Snowmass, CSCUSA, Ikon, Mountain Collective

Serious skiers swear by Highlands, and one peek at the trail map shows why: Nearly 80 percent of the mountain is shellacked in black and double black diamonds, including ◆◆ **Highland Bowl**, the state's crown jewel of in-bounds extreme skiing. "It's steep, long, and has very little skier traffic," says Kim Reichhelm, a former U.S. Ski Team member who calls the Elk Mountains home. "You can always find good snow on its 20-plus lines." To reach Highland, riders bootpack 782 vertical feet up a ridgeline from the top of the Loge Peak lift—a one-hour march. Their reward? A 2,500-vertical-foot plunge with bragging rights *and* face shots.

This spread, from left: Tamara Susa/Courtesy of Aspen Skiing Company; Courtesy of Winter Park Resort

WINTER PARK RESORT

Town: Winter Park
Distance from Denver: 67 miles
Pass: CSCUSA, Ikon

When the Winter Park ski area first welcomed guests in January 1940, it didn't count Mary Jane—its famously ungroomed, mogul-packed marquee mountain—as in-bounds territory. At that time, a club of Front Range–based downhill devotees owned the land. Its members would drive over Berthoud Pass to boot up and rip down one of the first recognized alpine ski runs in the Western United States. Its name, a nod to the lady of the night who owned the land in the 1880s, was the Mary Jane Trail.

Over the next few decades, Winter Park higher-ups watched as new resorts along the I-70 corridor slowly siphoned off their customers. Eager to give skiers a reason to veer right onto U.S. 40—rather than continue toward the about-to-be-completed Eisenhower Tunnel—they stretched their ski area onto Mary Jane Mountain. On January 10, 1976, Winter Park dropped the rope to a new 350-acre playland, a terrain expansion that was, in its day, among the largest in the nation.

The Jane, as she's known to the initiated, offered expert skiers densely treed, difficult slopes complete with cliff drops for those who wanted them. It still does—especially with expansions into the Parsenn Bowl and the Cirque. "[Mary Jane] is steep, it can be technical, and there's a lot of variety," says Natalie Newberry, who's logged more than a decade as a ski patroller at Winter Park Ski Resort. "You hear it a lot: Diehards go for the Jane."

This season, as Mary Jane recognizes 50 years as part of her home resort, expect a music-filled, giveaway-rich celebration on January 10 and 11, as well as yearlong tributes like commemorative chairs on the Super Gauge and Challenger lifts. The most fitting homage any lover of the Jane can make, however? A warm-up lap down her intermediate namesake trail before hitting a quad-scorching bump run like ◆ **Pine Cliffs** or ◆ **Outhouse**.

ELDORA MOUNTAIN RESORT

Town: Nederland
Distance from Denver: 50 miles
Pass: CSCUSA, Ikon

In August 2024, ski resort holding company Powdr hung a for-sale sign on Eldora Mountain Resort. The exit had nothing to do with finances—"Eldora is profitable," ski area president and general manager Brent Tregaskis promised—but rather with Powdr's plans to focus on other opportunities more "in alignment with its founder's and stakeholders' goals." (Read: ventures with its Woodward action-sports brand.)

This past summer, Nederland, which is situated about five miles from the ski area's high-speed Alpenglow lift, made an announcement of its own: The 1,500-person community—a town with about 30 employees and a $3.2 million general fund—had inked a letter of intent to purchase Eldora. Using cash from municipal bonds, the town is poised to spend $100 million to $200 million to bring the mountain under its ownership as soon as this season.

What does that mean for Front Range Ikon passholders who point their Subarus toward Eldora when I-70 is a mess? So far, not much. The 680-acre ski area will remain on the Ikon Pass this season. The Eldorables will still learn to pizza down Little Hawk and Fun Gully. And regulars will continue to groan when the Corona lift breaks down on a powder day, cutting off the steep, deep, and treed glory of must-ski (if you're an expert) runs like ◆◆ **Salto Glades** and ◆◆ **Moose Glades**.

What *will* change remains to be seen. Night-skiing operations and increased summer offerings have been proposed. Updates to lift infrastructure (cough, Corona) and snowmaking capabilities will be essential to keep Eldora competitive (and profitable), points out Andy Bigford, who co-authored the ski area's biography, *Eldora: Six Decades of Adventure*.

Assuming that happens, Bigford adds, this will be "just another chapter. Eldora has always figured out a way."

STEAMBOAT SKI RESORT

Town: Steamboat Springs
Distance from Denver: 160 miles
Pass: CSCUSA, Ikon, Mountain Collective

In winter, snowbirds flock to Steamboat to surf its light, fluffy (and trademarked!) Champagne Powder snow, which averages just six percent water content, compared to the typical 15 percent elsewhere in the West. When the pow piles up—and with an average of 307 inches annually, it does—Olympic boarder and Ski Town USA native Taylor Gold heads for ◆ **Nelson's Run**. "There are so many little hits to jump off and aspen groves on both sides," he says.

FUEL UP
Cheers a good day on the hill at Storm Peak Brewing Company's new Bus Stop Taproom & Kitchen location, which has 20 taps (and a Butterbeer ice cream float for groms) near the base of the mountain.

VAIL MOUNTAIN

Town: Vail
Distance from Denver: 100 miles
Pass: Epic

Distilling Colorado's largest ski area—5,317 acres, 195 trails, 32 lifts—into one must-try lap is impossible. Every front-side lift serves an easy way down, and intermediates can slash groomers on nearly every slope. The prize is the Back Bowls: a 3,017-acre mecca of expert terrain. For a Tour de Vail, choose your own adventure there (lower ◆ **Genghis Khan** is rarely bumped out; ◆ **Shangri-La** hides powder stashes), then navigate to the front side and link ■ **Avanti** (wide and cruisey), ◆ **Lindsey's** (nice snow near the trees), and ◆ **Pepi's Face** (a miserable but efficient sheet of ice). Your landing spot: the Los Amigos patio for happy hour and people-watching.

CRESTED BUTTE MOUNTAIN RESORT

Town: Crested Butte
Distance from Denver: 192 miles
Pass: Epic

Craving a challenge? Set your GPS for Crested Butte, an intimidating rampart in the Elk Mountains. It's more wild than manicured, but the quirky, colorful town wears its rugged reputation proudly. Dip your tips in on ◆◆ **Rambo**, a midmountain drop that locals claim is the steepest in North America. It's a heart-pounding plunge that's easily accessible from multiple lifts, including the intermediate-friendly Paradise Express—meaning less gnarly riders can skirt it on a gentler pitch and reconnect with their gutsier pals for a party lap to the base.

This spread, from left: Cullen McHale/Courtesy of Eldora Mountain Resort; Courtesy of Silverton Mountain

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SILVERTON MOUNTAIN

Town: Silverton
Distance from Denver: 330 miles
Pass: None

Labeling Silverton a “resort” is a stretch: It has no village and operates one lift. But for experts itching to try big-mountain skiing, there is no better place to pillage powder in a controlled environment. The single double chair serves a menu of expert lines—more, if you’re willing to shoulder your planks and hike a ridgeline at 12,000 feet—and helicopters and snowcats unlock untouched bowls and couloirs. Hire a guide to direct you to the day’s best thrills—and don’t forget your avalanche equipment.

LOVELAND SKI AREA

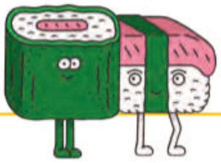
Town: Georgetown
Distance from Denver: 53 miles
Pass: CSCUSA, Indy

To the untrained eye, Loveland Ski Area, which perches rather precipitously on the Continental Divide, might seem like a paradise solely for expert skiers and riders. Its newly accessible Porcupine Ridge promises some 500 vertical feet of likely untracked powder for those tenacious enough to bootpack 45 minutes from Chair 9 to get it. Oh, *and* intermediate and expert terrain make up roughly 87 percent of its 1,800 total acres.

And yet, in spite of those whoop-worthy offerings, "I have so many people say, 'I learned to ski at Loveland,'" says its COO Rob Goodell. "People look left as they're coming up I-70, see our terrain, and might get a little intimidated. But, boy, you also just came by this beautiful terrain at Loveland Valley that's a great way to start."

Split into two sections, Loveland Ski Area is composed of the larger Loveland Basin (which has a bunny hill) and the smaller Loveland Valley, just east. A low-angle playground for folks new to the sport, the latter's two lifts and two magic carpets provide access solely to greens and blues—so wobbly first-timers need not worry about oblivious experts whizzing past en route to après. Plus, a Loveland Valley–only day pass costs just $50 ($30 for kids ages six to 14, free for five and under).

This season, the ski area unveils even more reasons to exit I-70 early and learn to ski or ride at Loveland Valley: Lift 7, a 40-year-old double, was replaced with a new, extra-wide triple-seater that's easier to load and ride. Maintenance teams also regraded and cleared trees from ● **Zig-Zag**, Loveland Valley's longest beginner trail, making it even better for French-frying (or pizza-ing—no judgment here).



FUEL UP
Find grab-and-go sushi at the Loveland Basin Lodge food hall.

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PURGATORY RESORT

Town: Durango
Distance from Denver: 363 miles
Pass: CSCUSA, Power Pass

When you buy in advance, lift tickets at this Powder Highway stunner cost as little as $15 midweek. That's reason enough to plan a trip to southwestern Colorado, where average annual snowfall at Purgatory exceeds 250 inches. It's an intermediate mountain comprising 65 percent blue and green runs, but for some classic San Juan freeskiing, dip into the ◆ **Ambassadors' Glade** off the front side, where small cliffbands provide natural drops and, if the snow is good, pillow lines. Rejoin your buddies on ■ **Upper Demon** for an eyeful of the pink-hued Needles en route to the base.

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TELLURIDE SKI RESORT

Town: Mountain Village
Distance from Denver: 360 miles
Pass: CSCUSA

Forget crowded lift lines and highway-adjacent amenities. Telluride pairs historical charm with world-class riding, and everyone scores San Juans scenery—even in the learning and intermediate areas (60 percent of the resort). If you're nifty with your boards, take pro freeskier Bobby Brown's advice and head to ◆◆ **Little Rose** off the Gold Hill Express. "It's a natural halfpipe that holds snow—amazing tree skiing and *steep*," he says.

GRANBY RANCH

Town: Granby
Distance from Denver: 86 miles
Pass: CSCUSA, Indy

Granby Ranch leaves the mega-resort bustle to its neighbor, Winter Park. Here, it's all about relaxed skiing and family-friendly turns. Two peaks split the duties: one dedicated to beginners and intermediates, the other to more advanced riders sneaking in steeps. For a run that shows off Granby's sweet spot, cruise down ● **Buckhorn**, an east-side groomer that's wide enough to build confidence. Thanks to a feature-filled fringe, experts won't lose interest.

LOCAL LINES

You won't find a ton of amenities—or, in some cases, lifts—at these municipal hills, but if you're in the area and hunting for turns, the price is right.

CHAPMAN HILL SKI AREA

Durango
"Hill" is a misnomer—it's steep. But if you're solid on your edges, it's a fun, ultra-affordable alternative to nearby Purgatory. *Adults $16, children starting at $6*

CRANOR SKI HILL

Gunnison
Like Crested Butte light, its four runs blend across a bowl with varying aspects, pitches, and features. *Adults $25, children $15*

ECHO MOUNTAIN

Idaho Springs
Only 36 miles from downtown, it's the closest downhill skiing to Denver—and included on several mega passes. Bonus: night skiing. *Adults starting at $50, children starting at $30*

HOEDOWN HILL

Windsor
Learn the basics or practice your technique on man-made groomers without heading into the mountains. Gear is discounted through Mountain Rentals. *Starting at $20*

HOWELSEN HILL SKI AREA

Steamboat Springs
Shred North America's oldest operating ski area, then gape at the legendary jump complex where Olympians train—and fly. It's also included on multiple pass collectives. *Adults $49, children $36*

KENDALL MOUNTAIN RECREATION AREA

Silverton
If a heli drop is out of your bag (or budget), rip around this more traditional ski area, which has one double chairlift and half a dozen runs. *Adults $31, children $22*

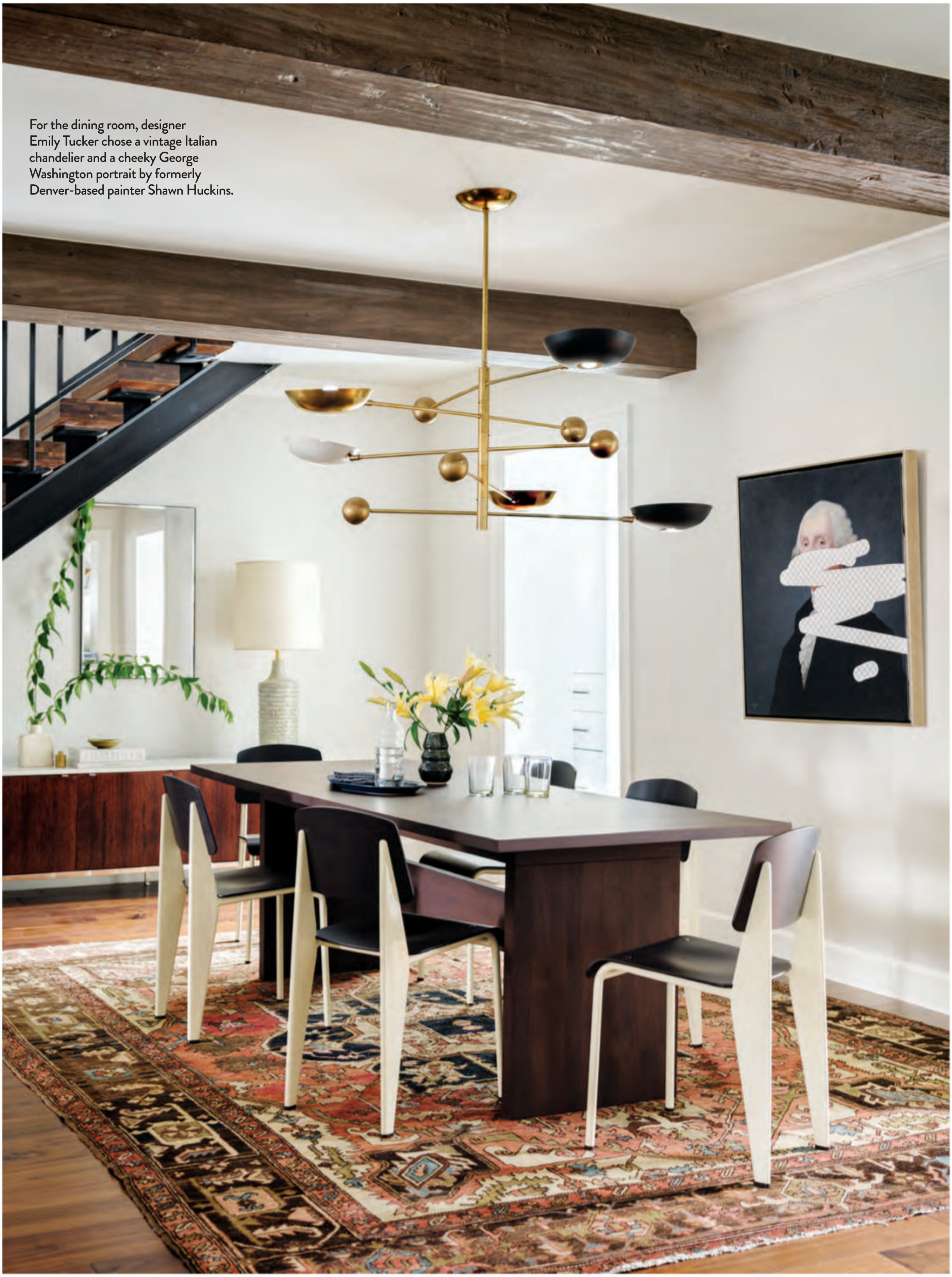
LAKE CITY SKI HILL

Lake City
A surface lift travels 1,000 feet up a tongue of corduroy for relatively long, beginner-friendly runs. Cool: Rental equipment is included with a day pass. *Adults starting at $25, children starting at $15*

LEE'S SKI HILL

Ouray
With a single rope tow and 75 feet of vert, it's not exactly destination-worthy. But it's free, making it a nice add-on to a hot-springs or ice-climbing itinerary. ▲

This spread, from top: Christian Ridings/Courtesy of Purgatory Resort; Tony Demin/Courtesy of Visit Telluride

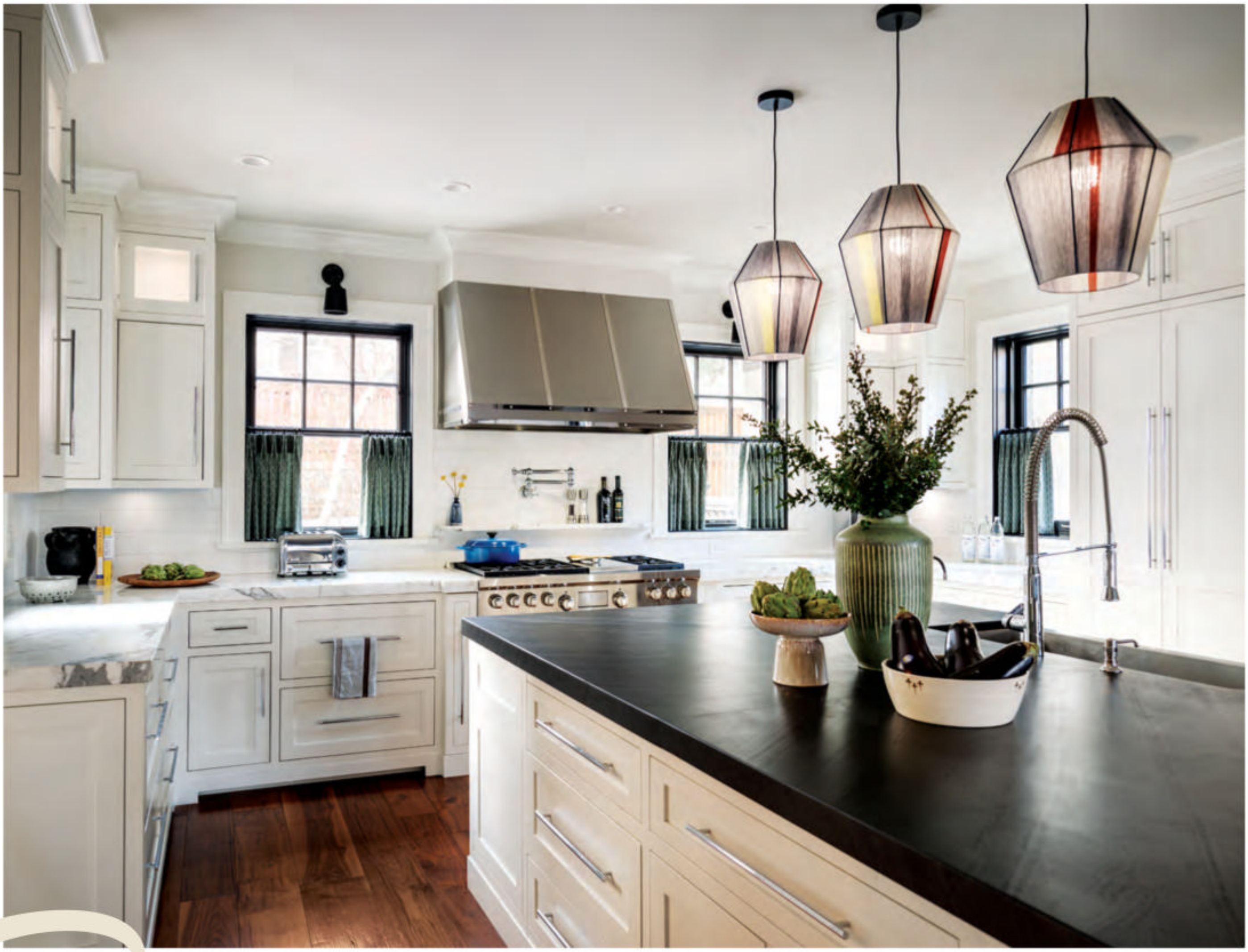


For the dining room, designer Emily Tucker chose a vintage Italian chandelier and a cheeky George Washington portrait by formerly Denver-based painter Shawn Huckins.

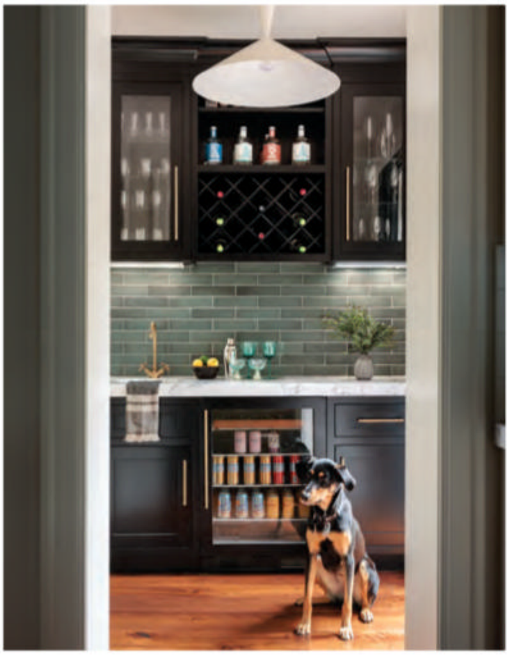
Leaning In

A Boulder home refresh proves that creativity thrives under constraints.

BY MICHELLE SHORTALL / PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID LAUER

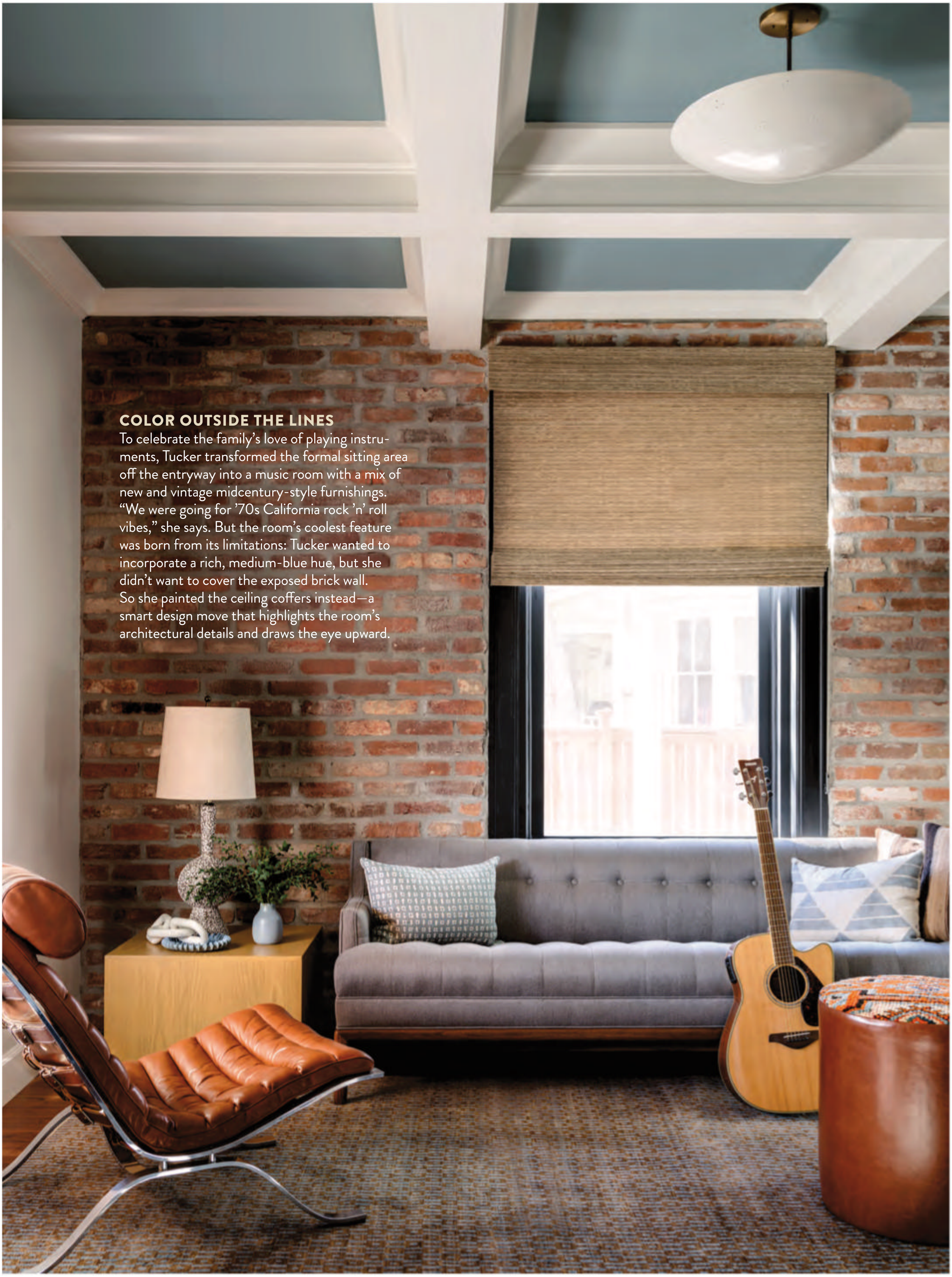


Boulder-based interior designer Emily Tucker doesn't always wait for projects to come to her. "I look at on-the-market houses all the time," she says, and sometimes asks the listing agent to connect her with the eventual buyer. But in the case of this early 1900s farmhouse in downtown Boulder, she didn't even have time to reach out. "I saw the for-sale sign and was like, *Oh, I'd love to work with whoever purchases that house*," she says. "An hour later, I got an email from the buyer." Convinced it was kismet, Tucker agreed to help the couple—who were moving their family of seven from California—update the century-old house. The catch? She had only three months to execute their vision of a "cool, comfortable place where nothing was too precious," she says. And, since it was June 2021, the pandemic had slowed the manufacturing and shipping of furniture and materials. To meet her deadline, she primarily purchased locally available and vintage furnishings, and instead of swapping out structural elements and hard finishes, she focused on paint colors, accessories, and textiles. We asked the designer and owner of Emily Tucker Design how she employed quick fixes anyone could use as a blueprint for their next home refresh.

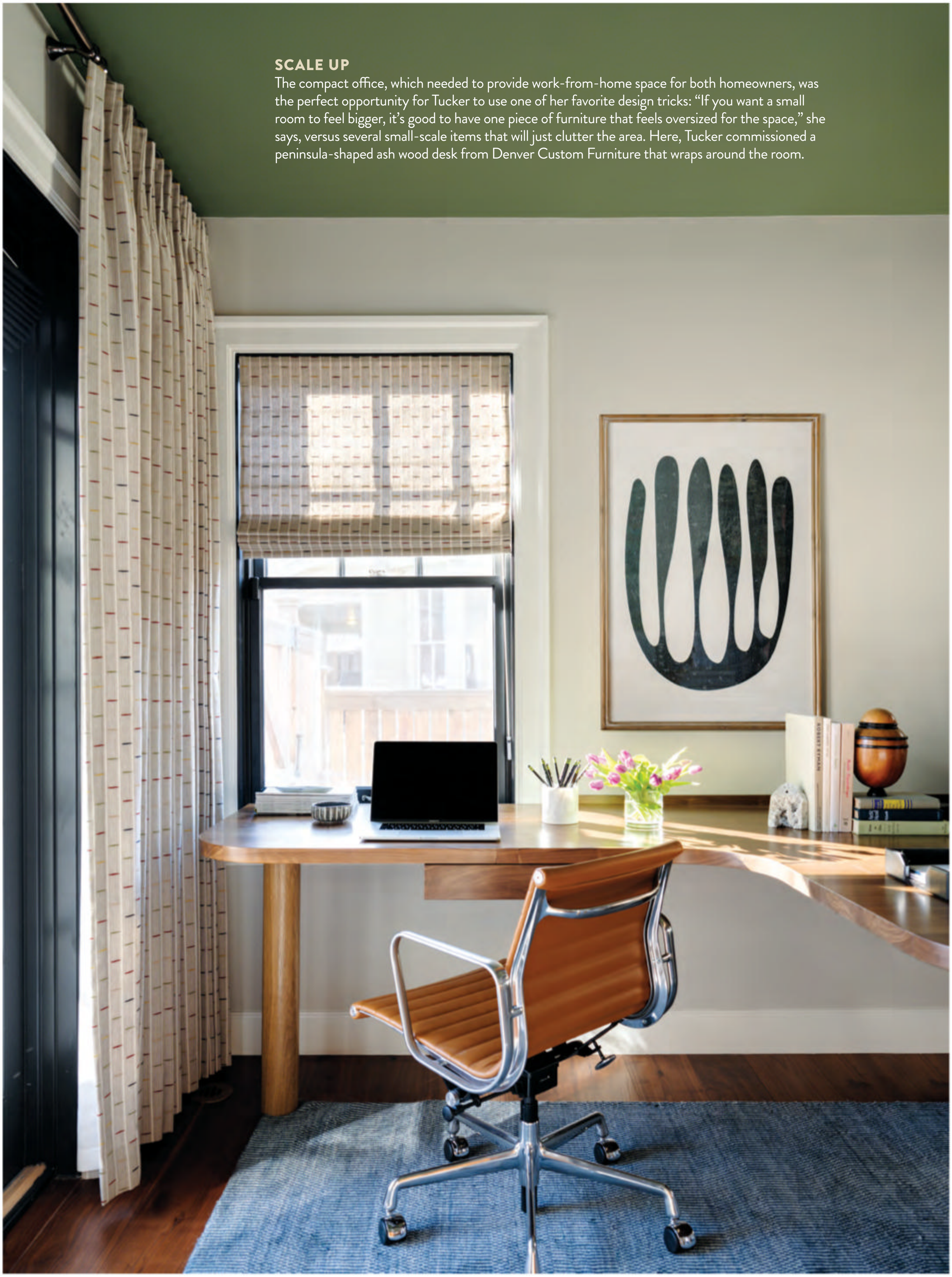


PICK YOUR BATTLES

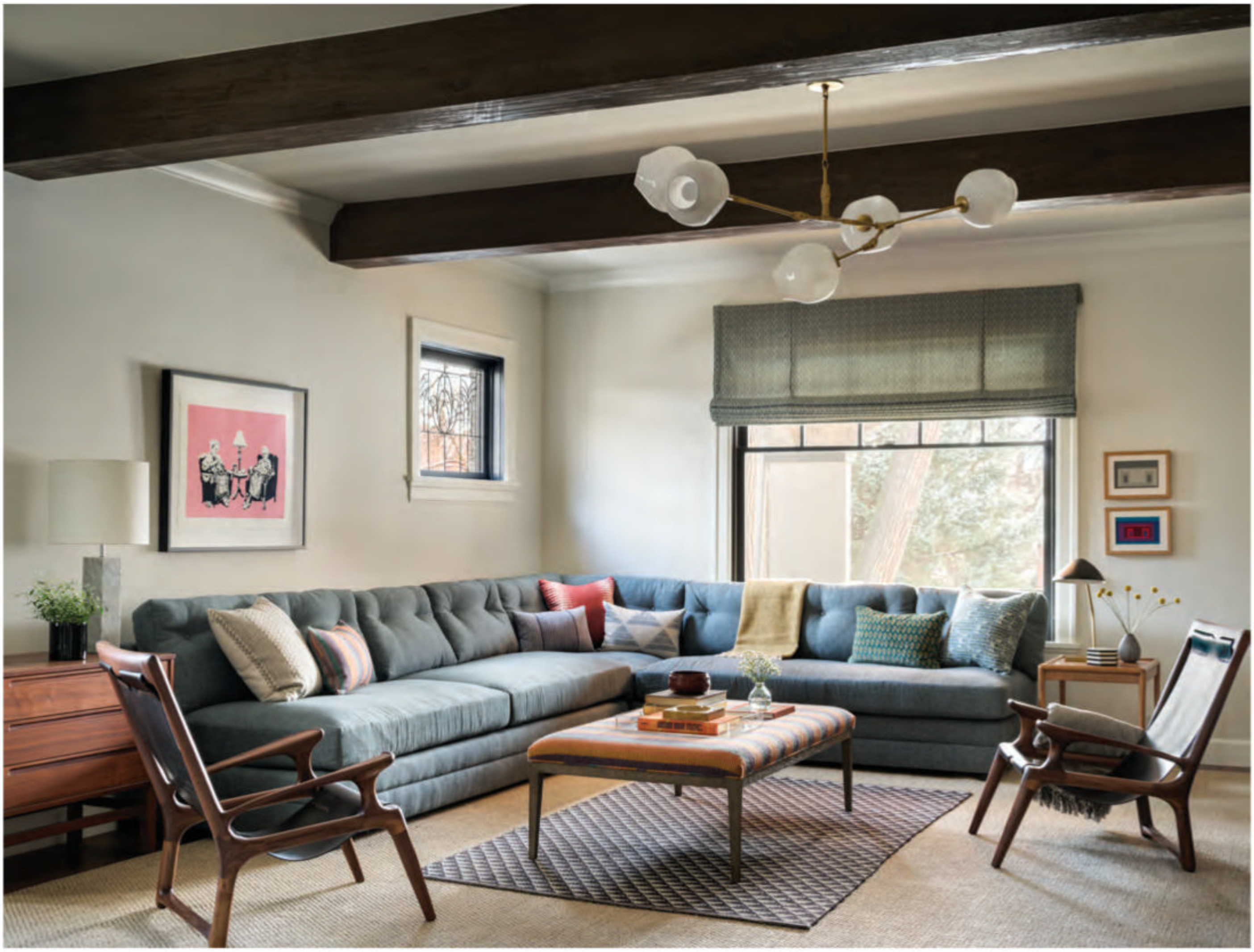
Tucker rarely signs off on an all-white kitchen, but "painting cabinetry is a nightmare," she says. So she kept the ivory cupboards, adding texture to the stark space via deep teal cafe curtains and woven pendant lights. In the adjoining bar, Tucker executed the only hard-finish fix of the whole renovation: She replaced a mirrored-gold-tile backsplash with earthy green ceramic subway tile to create continuity with the kitchen's window treatments. "I usually like medium-format tile for a backsplash," Tucker says. "Too small of a tile is hard to clean."



COLOR OUTSIDE THE LINES
To celebrate the family's love of playing instruments, Tucker transformed the formal sitting area off the entryway into a music room with a mix of new and vintage midcentury-style furnishings. "We were going for '70s California rock 'n' roll vibes," she says. But the room's coolest feature was born from its limitations: Tucker wanted to incorporate a rich, medium-blue hue, but she didn't want to cover the exposed brick wall. So she painted the ceiling coffers instead—a smart design move that highlights the room's architectural details and draws the eye upward.



SCALE UP
The compact office, which needed to provide work-from-home space for both homeowners, was the perfect opportunity for Tucker to use one of her favorite design tricks: "If you want a small room to feel bigger, it's good to have one piece of furniture that feels oversized for the space," she says, versus several small-scale items that will just clutter the area. Here, Tucker commissioned a peninsula-shaped ash wood desk from Denver Custom Furniture that wraps around the room.

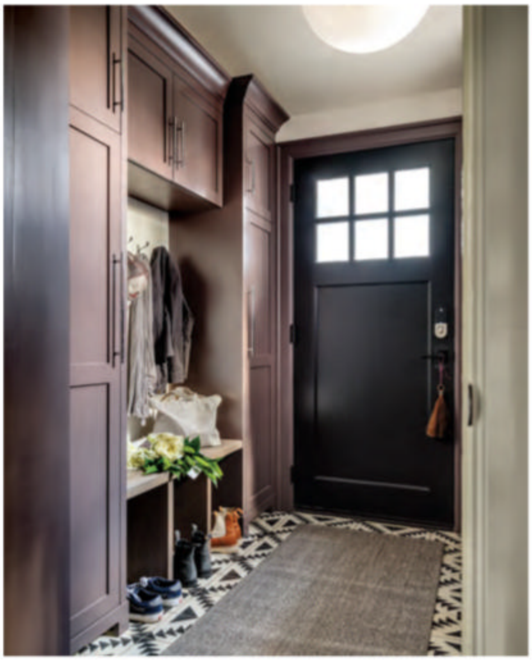


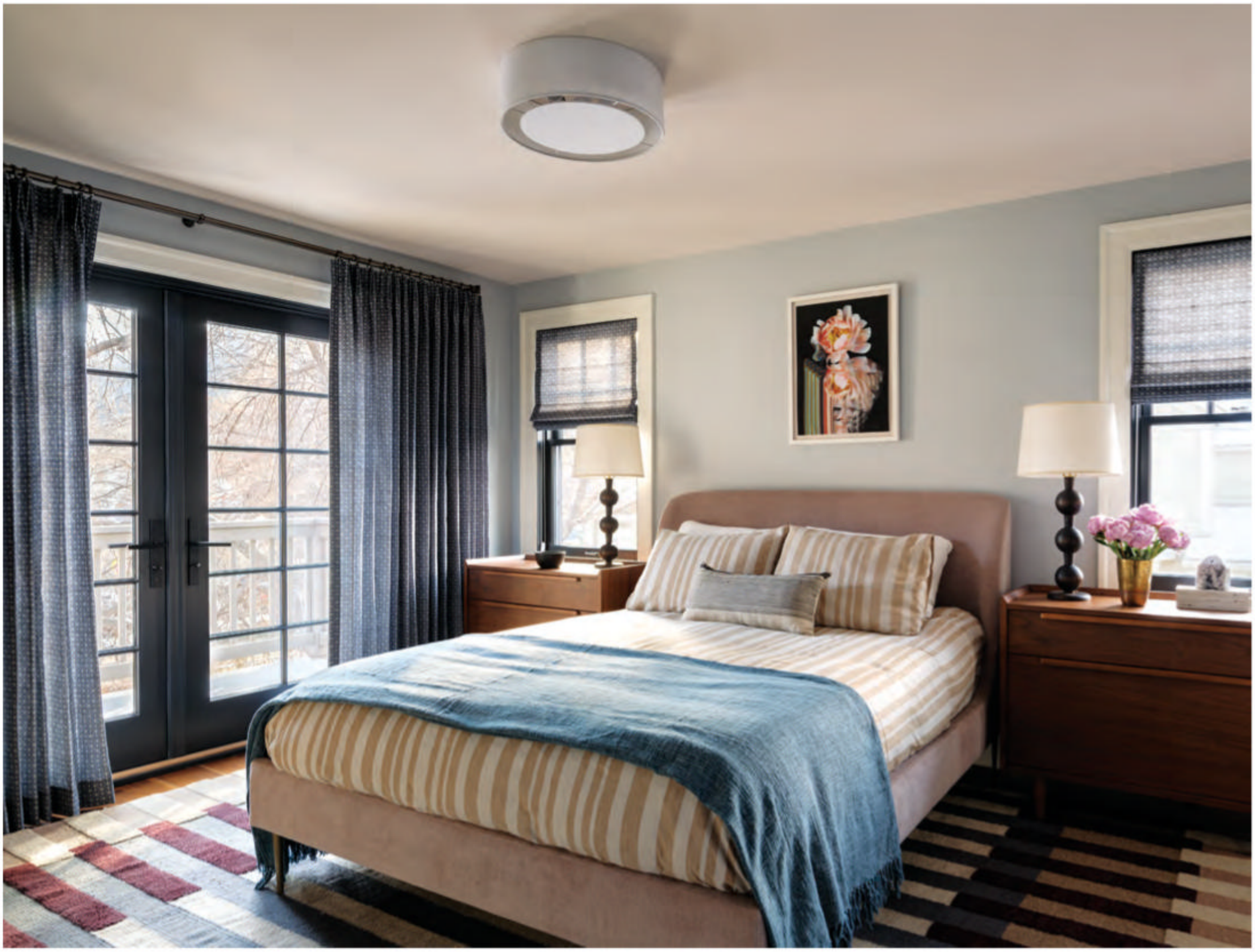
DON'T OVERCOMMIT

"Accessories and art are a really good way to add color, because they're not permanent," Tucker says. "If you bring in a red pillow and then one day you're not feeling it anymore, just swap it out. It doesn't have to be precious or serious." In the living room, Tucker topped the deep blue sectional (made to order by Denver's Rooster Socks Furniture & Design) with throw pillows in kaleidoscopic hues and hung the walls with framed art prints. "Art brings so much personality to a space," Tucker says. "Just make sure you get it properly framed and matted. A linen or textured mat will make inexpensive prints look so much more elevated."

SNEAK IN SURPRISES

While Tucker kept the walls and ceilings white in the main living areas, she played with a spectrum of bold yet grounding paint colors in the home's more secluded spots. In the mudroom, for example, a purple hue with brown undertones envelops the built-in cabinetry. "It adds drama, but since it isn't a deep jewel tone, it doesn't feel like as much of a commitment," Tucker says.



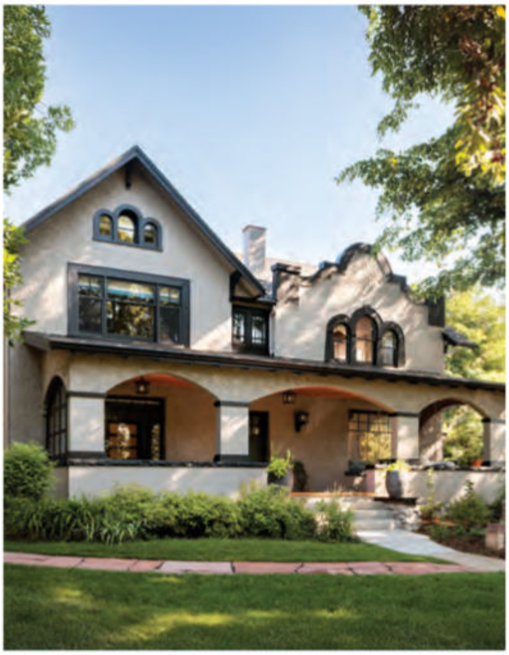


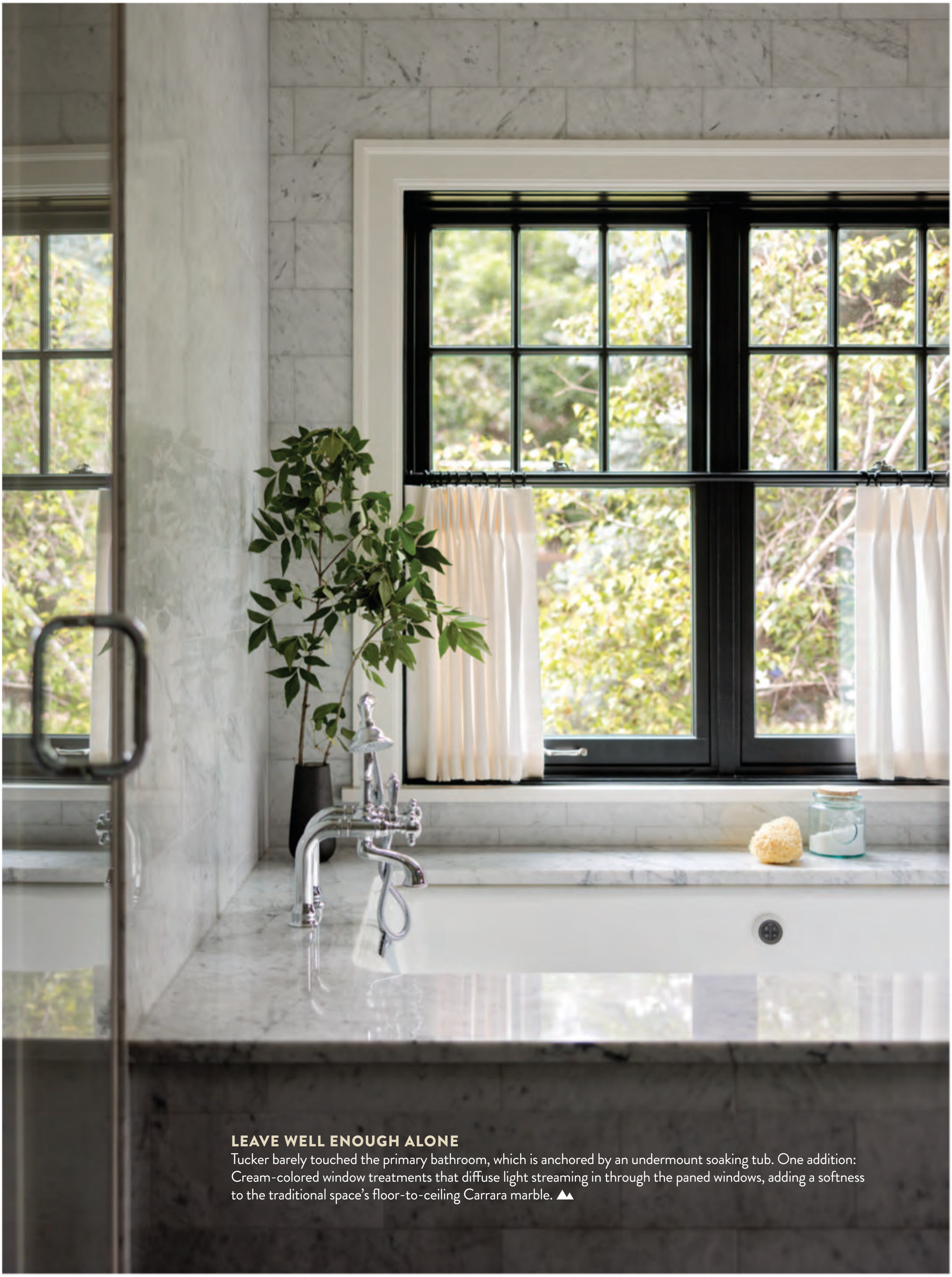
SPEND WHERE IT COUNTS

Tucker saved on small decorative items and inexpensive art prints. Her splurge-worthy goods? "I'm a big believer in investing in lighting and window treatments, because you're probably not going to change them out as much," she says. "Poorly sewn or sloppy window treatments really bother me." For this bedroom, pull-down shades and French-door curtains were custom-made in an elevated printed linen. The fabric's small, subtle pattern complements the large-scale motifs of the rug and bedding.

TAKE CUES FROM THE EXTERIOR

When she saw the for-sale sign go up, Tucker, who works nearby in Boulder, immediately admired the home's Dutch colonial facade, arched windows emphasized by contrast trim, and Denver Square–style front porch from afar. "It's very unique for this area," she says. "It's very grand."





LEAVE WELL ENOUGH ALONE
Tucker barely touched the primary bathroom, which is anchored by an undermount soaking tub. One addition: Cream-colored window treatments that diffuse light streaming in through the paned windows, adding a softness to the traditional space's floor-to-ceiling Carrara marble. ▲▲

CULTURE HEROES

WITH FEDERAL ARTS FUNDING AND ARTISTIC FREEDOM UNDER ATTACK, HERE ARE 10 MEANINGFUL ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE TO SUPPORT THE LOCAL CREATIVE ECOSYSTEM. BY BARBARA O'NEIL

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARIA GABRIELLA GASPARRI

Musician Wes Watkins performs at Denver's Union Hall in front of works by Madeline Job (*far right*) and Jason Abrams.

WHETHER YOU'RE WATCHING A REGIONAL PREMIERE BY THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE'S CURIOUS THEATRE COMPANY, MEANDERING THROUGH THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY Art Denver, or snapping a pic of RiNo's latest mural, that moment of inspiration likely cost more to produce than what you paid to enjoy it. Only about half of nonprofit arts and culture organizations' budgets come from admissions; private donors and government support generally cover the rest. So, when the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency that helps fund arts organizations, began withdrawing grant offers on May 2, Colorado's creative community was understandably alarmed.

The emailed revocation announcements came hours after President Donald Trump called for eliminating the agency entirely in his budget proposal, but the messages offered little detail: "The NEA is updating its grantmaking policy priorities to focus funding on projects that reflect the nation's rich artistic heritage and creativity as prioritized by the President. Consequently, we are terminating awards that fall outside these new priorities."

Twenty-two Colorado organizations were expecting $435,000 in combined NEA grants this year. One, for $30,000, was set to fund the Denver Art Museum's *Andrea Carlson: A Constant Sky*, a survey of the Indigenous mixed-media artist's works that address colonialism. "We are fortunate that we can pivot to other resources rather than relying on federal funding to complete projects like the one our grant award was to have supported," says Chiara Robinson, director of institutional giving at the museum, where the exhibit debuted last month as planned. Smaller organizations aren't always so lucky.

Just four days after Trump's terminations, Denver's Bonfils-Stanton Foundation, one of the city's largest private arts funders, launched a series of Rapid Response Grants that came to $400,000 and prioritized organizations that had lost federal grants, serve marginalized communities, or both. "Those are the populations that we're seeing caught in the crosshairs," says Chrissy Deal, Bonfils-Stanton's director of leadership and arts and social change grants.

Among the recipients was the nonprofit Gift of Jazz, which provides free music programs to public schools in Denver, Adams, and Jefferson counties and had lost a $20,000 NEA grant. Organizations had seven days to appeal, and some, like Gift of Jazz, were successful in reinstating their NEA money. "We're thrilled to hopefully have this support coming through," says Nicolette Andres, executive director of Gift of Jazz, "but the bigger landscape is still really scary."

That picture includes the Trump administration's push for greater control over cultural institutions, from installing the president as the chairman of the Kennedy Center to an August demand that the Smithsonian museums review their exhibits to be sure the content meets the president's directive to "celebrate American exceptionalism" and "remove divisive or partisan narratives." (On social media, Trump clarified that the Smithsonian focuses too much on "how bad slavery was.") With federal dollars and the future of artistic freedom uncertain, we asked creators, curators, and advocates how arts lovers can keep Colorado's cultural heart beating—even if they don't have the cash to plaster their name on a gallery wing.

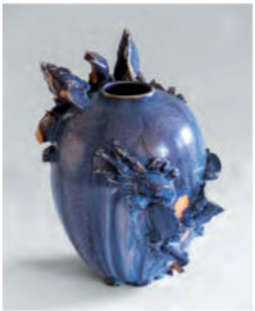
Raymundo Muñoz/Courtesy of Union Hall

1

Become An Art Collector

Acquiring original works isn't just a hobby for the one percent.

If you think "art collecting" is synonymous with "trust fund," Delia LaJeunesse wants to change your mind. As founder of Denver's Delia LaJeunesse Art Consulting, she helps aesthetes of all income levels curate their own personal galleries. "Buying artwork is truly significant to the individual artist," she says. We asked LaJeunesse how to get in on the action—regardless of your budget.



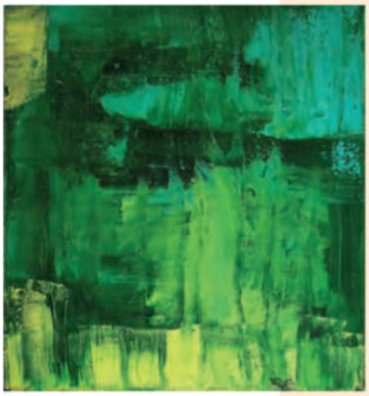
A vase from Tristan Chen

Under $200

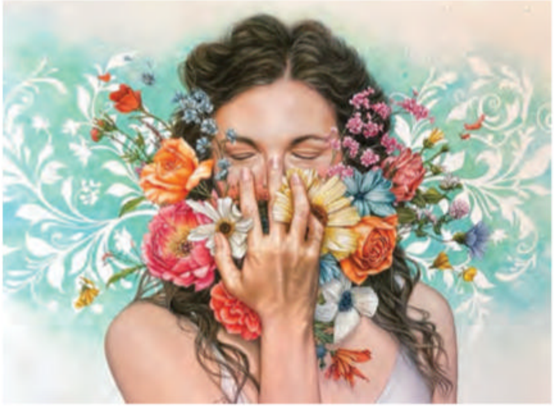
If you have just a couple of hundred bucks to spare, LaJeunesse suggests keeping an eye on the Art Students League of Denver's event calendar. *All That Glitters: A Holiday Salon* opens, with sparkling works from students and instructors across a variety of mediums and prices, on November 11 at the organization's Romanesque headquarters in the Speer neighborhood. Or save up for the Affordable Arts Festival next August: If you can stash just $15 per month, you'll be able to bring home a piece from the annual shindig on the grounds of Arapahoe Community College, where works from more than 160 artists are all $150 or less.

$200 to $3,000

You can find gallery-exhibited art for under $3,000 in Denver, including at RiNo's FooLPRoof Contemporary Art Gallery and City Park West's nonprofit Leon Gallery, which often features emerging artists. Tech-savvy collectors can also turn to Instagram. "You might have to do a lot of inquiring, but it's a great platform for people in the mid-range who want to connect with artists directly," LaJeunesse says.



"Abstract Green" by L Phelps Rogers, available at FooLPRoof Contemporary Art



Mark Penner-Howell's "Smash," available at Walker Fine Art

$3,000+

At this level of investment, research matters, whether that's contacting gallery owners or hiring an art consultant. "You'll want to ensure that you're finding art that's emotionally resonant with you, has some degree of salience, and comes from an artist who's gaining traction," LaJeunesse says. She likes K Contemporary in LoDo and Walker Fine Art in the Golden Triangle. Don't forget to ask the artist for tips on maintenance (e.g., keeping the work out of direct sunlight) and installation.

GIVE TIME

Kathy Hall, *volunteer for Access Gallery, a nonprofit in Lincoln Park that provides arts opportunities to people with disabilities*

What do you do in your volunteer role? Sometimes I assist the art teachers or wash brushes. I really enjoy being a chaperone on field trips to local museums. I love seeing the kids light up when we go out. **Why do you love it?** Seeing the joy in the people served by Access Gallery is contagious, and every time I volunteer, I know I'm going to have a great day.

From top: Courtesy of Tristan Chen; Courtesy of FooLPRoof Contemporary Art Gallery; Courtesy of Walker Fine Art

2

DONATE MONEY

Direct donations mean small arts organizations like Union Hall don't have to compromise their values to keep federal funding.

Union Hall, a nonprofit gallery inside the Coloradan, a LoHi condo complex, was set to receive a $25,000 NEA grant. But when funding for Rough Gems—a training program for emerging curators—was withdrawn, Union Hall's leadership chose not to appeal. "Our mission is to support diverse artists and curators, and we're not backing down on that," says Jess Díaz, gallery and marketing manager for the space. "We're instead directly seeking funding from foundations that support the diversification of creative voices." One such organization was the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation, which awarded Union Hall a $20,000 Rapid Response Grant that allowed Rough Gems to move forward. "NEA was a wake-up call," Díaz says. Rather than continuing to seek federal funding, Union Hall is shifting its financial model, in part by charging other creative groups to rent its space for art pop-ups, cultural programming, and creative events. While that program launches in January, Union Hall will open its next exhibit, *Biyáál*, this month. The show features three Navajo artists from the same family, including local artist JayCee Beyale, and is anchored by two sand pieces. Díaz urges you to see it. "With federal funding cuts, individual donations matter more than ever," she says. "They directly allow us to maintain free public programming and support the equitable stipends we provide the artists we work with."

3

Support Local Theater

You might just see the next Broadway star.

Long before she rolled into the spotlight at New York City’s iconic Gershwin Theatre, former Sedalia resident Jenna Bainbridge performed on small stages throughout the Denver area. Bainbridge, who became paralyzed as a toddler due to unknown causes, uses a cane, wheelchair, and crutches to move around. When she was 12 years old and expressed interest in acting, her parents took her to the Cole neighborhood’s Phamaly Theatre Company, which exclusively features actors with disabilities. There—and with companies including the Arvada Center for the Arts, Aurora Fox Arts Center, and the Colorado Shakespeare Festival—Bainbridge played roles such as Cinderella in *Into The Woods* and Beth in *Little Women*. In 2024, she joined the ensemble of *Suffs* on Broadway, and this year, Bainbridge became the first ambulatory wheelchair user to play Nessarose in Broadway’s *Wicked*.

“Local theater is where you get your artists from,” Bainbridge says. “Plenty of Hollywood actors and directors had their start in local productions.” But with arts funding in peril, local theaters are scrambling to find replacement dollars. Boulder’s Motus Theater, for example, was set to receive $35,000 to fund *Youth Behind & Beyond Bars*, a series of monologues written by formerly incarcerated youth. Per NEA grant requirements, the theater budgeted for an additional $35,000 to match. The Motus team filed an appeal but were told in August that the effort was denied. Motus directors had to make some changes to *Youth Behind & Beyond Bars*, but thanks to individual donations and gifts from foundations like Bonfils-Stanton, Motus raised around $55,000 of its anticipated $70,000 budget. “NEA funding isn’t the only thing affecting arts organizations right now,” says Rita M. Rufino Valente-Quinn, Motus’ producing executive director. “Many nonprofits received funds through COVID relief programs, and that money is gone now. The need is still there, but the money is not.”

Bainbridge in *Wicked*

At Phamaly Theatre Company, where Bainbridge got her start, managing director Corinne Melon was notified in May that the NEA-funded ArtsHERE program would not dole out the remaining $32,500 of its $130,000 grant. The cash was supposed to support a new staff member and a touring production using the Hunter Heartbeat Method, which brings theater to audiences with high-impact cognitive disabilities. “We had a nonverbal 10-year-old come to a show, and she had so much fun that her dad brought her back the next day, and she then actually spoke some words to us,” Melon says. “This program has been amazing for us, and we really want to try to keep it going.” Because Phamaly works with people with disabilities and the current presidential administration is working to terminate diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, Melon says she doubts Phamaly will receive federal funding next year—making ticket sales even more critical.

From left: Joan Marcus/Courtesy of *Wicked*; Courtesy of Steven Boroughs

4

SEE A SHOW

We asked Broadway's Jenna Bainbridge, Phamaly Theatre Company's Corinne Melon, and Motus Theater's Rita M. Rufino Valente-Quinn for their top recs for this theater season.

Youth Behind & Beyond Bars
November 15
At the Lafayette Public Library, catch moving monologues from formerly incarcerated young artists that unveil the realities of the juvenile justice system. While NEA cuts forced Motus Theater to pare down the performance, a full regional premiere is planned in January at the state Capitol.

Holidays are for Phamaly & the Colorado Symphony
December 6 and 9
This annual holiday-themed cabaret pairs seasonal tunes performed by a string quartet of Colorado Symphony musicians with monologues and songs from Phamaly actors. Complimentary fidget tools, ASL translations, and audio descriptions are available during the show.

Junie B. Jones, The Musical
January 23 to May 8, 2026
As an alumna, Bainbridge recommends pretty much anything the Arvada Center for the Arts and Humanities puts on. Bring your kindergartners through fifth graders to a musical twist on Barbara Park's Junie B. Jones book series.

Youth Behind & Beyond Bars

5

Get The Kids Involved

Three local ways to encourage arts appreciation in the next generation.

The Children's Museum's Art Studio
In this permanent space within the Children's Museum of Denver at Marsico Campus (*pictured*), kids can add a splash of color to a 1972 Volkswagen Beetle, draw on a window with chalk, or paint on an easel (and take their masterpiece home.)
Parent tip: Visit between 10:30 a.m. and 3 p.m. to access the sculpting supplies. Molding the clay is free, but you can also have your kids' creations fired and glazed for a fee (price varies based on weight).

Art Garage
This nearly 20-year-old visual arts organization in South Park Hill offers classes for kids of all ages, from toddler-and-parent instruction to multiweek, open-studio-style courses for teenagers. Mediums range from ceramics to yarn art to digital animation.
Parent tip: Watch for camps that coincide with school closures, such as Art Garage's Thanksgiving break camp (beginning November 24), during which tots can paint real gourds and older kids can design their own comic book characters.

The Making Space at the Clyfford Still Museum
This 28,500-square-foot museum is dedicated to the abstract art of Clyfford Still. Young artists can take inspiration from the famed American expressionist at the Making Space, a creation studio designed with feedback from Colorado State University's Early Childhood Center. Don't miss Art Crawl, a program held multiple times each month for babies, from newborns up to 14-month-olds.
Parent tip: Stop by the information desk for a copy of the bilingual *Family Activity Book*. Kids can partake in a scavenger hunt and create their own art to be shared online.

GIVE TIME

Meghan Clarisse Cave, *a country musician and volunteer for Musicians On Call, a Nashville-based national nonprofit that brings live musicians to hospital patients*

What do you do in your volunteer role? I visit patients at Children's Hospital Colorado and the VA Medical Center and play at patients' bedsides. Sometimes I'm singing "Wheels on the Bus" for a toddler or Taylor Swift for a teen. **Why do you love it?** Giving back is so essential to living a fulfilling life, and I love that I can do it through my passion for music.

From left: Courtesy of Youth Behind Bars; Andrew Han/Courtesy of Children's Museum of Denver at Marsico Campus

6

ATTEND DENVER ARTS WEEK

Get in on the Mile High City's annual celebration of arts and culture, from November 7 to 16, with these three special events.

Colfax Art Crawl

November 7

There's more than one art district in town: The 40 West Arts District is upping its game with a Día de los Muertos–themed art crawl (*pictured*) that includes murals, altars, and exhibits from Latino and Indigenous makers installed around West Colfax Avenue. *Free*

Free Night at the Museums

November 8

From 5 to 10 p.m., you can ride gratis shuttles among many of the city's top cultural repositories, including the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, Museo De Las Americas, Clyfford Still Museum, and the Museum for Black Girls. *Free*

Best of Exposed 2025

November 14

Each month, five brave community members tell their stories—inviting attendees to share in their most personal secrets, regrets, failures, and triumphs—at LoHi's Bug Theatre. This curated special showcase will highlight some of the year's heaviest-hitting tales. *From $20*

7

Patronize Underrepresented Artists

Denver muralist Danielle SeeWalker explains why it's critical to support artists from diverse backgrounds.

Danielle SeeWalker, a Húŋkpapȟa Lakȟóta citizen of North Dakota's Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, is familiar with the perils of the arts world: About a month before the Denver artist was to start work as Vail's 2024 artist-in-residence, the town revoked her offer. The reason? A painting she shared on social media titled "G is for Genocide," which depicts parallels between the war in Gaza and the treatment of Native Americans in the United States. In August, Vail settled a lawsuit brought by the ACLU of Colorado, with, among other efforts, the town agreeing to fund a new art program for underrepresented people and to host an annual powwow for the next five years. Although she sees the settlement as a victory, SeeWalker is still recovering from harmful messages and lost business due to the suit. We spoke with her to learn more about the importance of supporting art—even when it's controversial.

_5280_: Have you personally experienced any effects from the NEA funding cuts?

Danielle SeeWalker: I was supposed to have an exhibition at a gallery in Las Vegas in August. The grant they were relying on was cut. A lot of those grants were nixed if you use DEI terms, like "women" or "people of color," so my show was not able to get funded. Thankfully, they were determined to run it anyways, so the show was postponed for a year from now. They're trying to find funding elsewhere.

How can people best support underrepresented artists right now?

Obviously, monetary donations are always welcome, because it takes money to create art. And specifically, a lot of Native American creators, especially those living on the reservation, don't necessarily have access to resources like art supplies. But since not everybody is in the position to make monetary donations, just sharing their artwork on social media, going to their show, or buying a piece of their artwork at a market are all great ways to support.

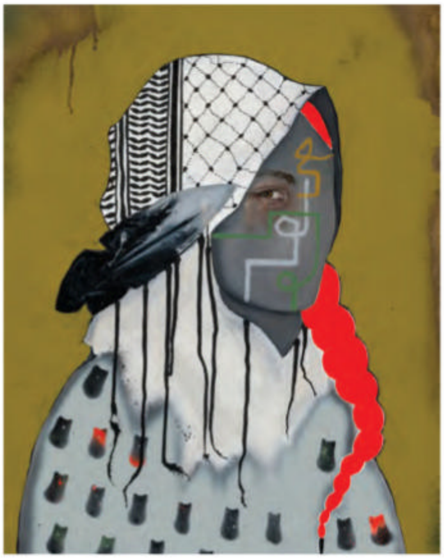
Do you feel that Indigenous artists are given enough visibility in the Denver art scene?

I moved to Denver in 2018 because it's close to nature, it was close enough for me to go home to North Dakota, and because there's a great Native American population that exists here. When I first moved here, I really integrated myself in the art scene by going to local shows and befriending artists, and what I found was that there really wasn't any representation of Native women, especially in mural art. So one of my objectives was to create that representation. I wanted to get a foot in the door and bring others with me. I feel like I've been able to do that through collaborating on murals with other Native artists, sitting on boards, and being part of advisory councils. I think we're moving in the right direction, but there's always room for more opportunities for underrepresented people.

What's your next big project?

I'm having a solo show in Durango at Fort Lewis College [from October 23 to November 19]. Fort Lewis College has a big Native American population,

"G is for Genocide" by Danielle SeeWalker



From left: Courtesy of 40 West Arts District; Courtesy of Danielle SeeWalker ("G is for Genocide," 2024)

Sarah Banks (paintings by Danielle SeeWalker, from left: "She is his Lakota Arm Candy," 2025; "The Chairwoman," 2025)

and they offer [tuition waivers] to that community. Part of this exhibition is me working with those Native students who are interested in the arts and curatorial work. I get to work side by side, planning and installing my show, with those students. It's an opportunity to mentor as well, which I'm really excited about. I'm creating a new body of work for it; it'll be multidisciplinary. I recently painted a basketball hoop, because basketball is a really popular sport on the reservation, so I wanted to highlight what we call reservation basketball. But I'll also have my signature kind of paintings that people are used to seeing as well.

Why do you feel it's important to continue to create art that inspires social change? Generations before me have been doing that, if you look at historical artworks from the Civil Rights Movement or during the Vietnam War, so it's not a new concept. A lot of my artwork is centered on being Native American and my identity as a woman, and I feel like I already live a very political existence. For example, my dad was born during a time when Native people weren't fully allowed to vote. So, I feel like I have this sense of obligation to speak up on behalf of my family, my people, and my community. And I also think that you can bring awareness and reach people through art where you otherwise couldn't. Art has a unique reach.

GIVE CREDIT

If you have an Instagram (or Facebook or TikTok) account, you can support artists simply by pulling out your phone. Like just about everyone else selling something today, creatives rely on social media to grow their networks of potential buyers. Whether you're snapping a photo of a sculpture in a white-walled gallery or a three-story mural on the street, before you post it, try to find and tag the maker on whatever platform you're using. You never know who might see your image and be inspired to share it further—or even make a purchase.

8

Take A Road Trip

The federal cuts go statewide—and so should you.

Aspen Santa Fe Ballet
After a $25,000 NEA funding cut and the departure of longtime director Francisco Nevarez-Burgueño, this ballet school is shutting down a program that provided free instruction in Mexican folkloric dance to schoolchildren. The organization is still putting on ballet performances, however, and serves more than 500 students across its Colorado and New Mexico locations.

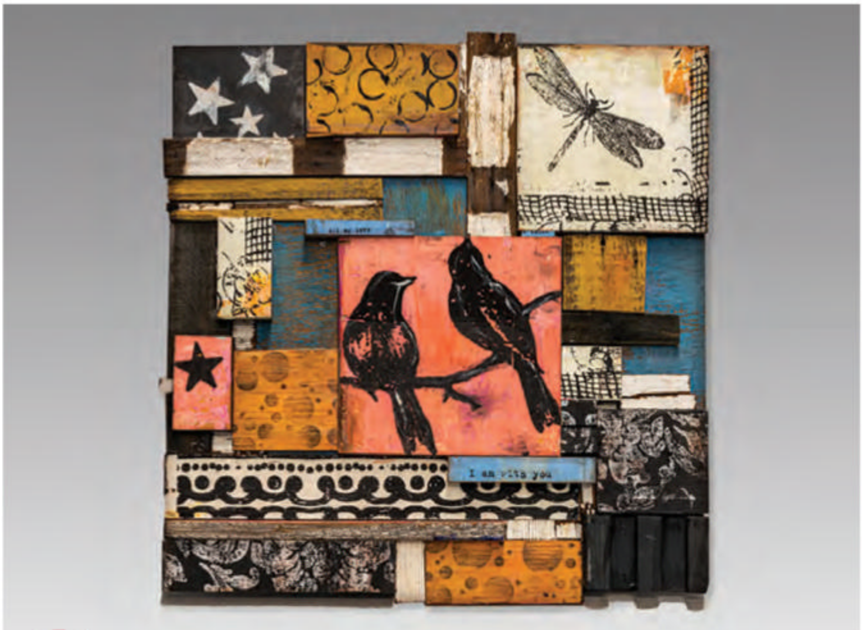
Fraser Valley Arts
This nonprofit was able to make up the $10,000 it was expecting from the NEA to fund its annual plein air festival through the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation. While the organization wants to raise money to secure a physical location in Fraser, you can show your support in the meantime by attending its regular art shows and performances. (2025's lineup included a one-woman performance from Emmy-winning actress Jodie Comer.)

Leonardo da Vinci Museum of North America
It was in Amboise—a small village in France where Leonardo da Vinci spent the last years of his life—that chairman of the Southern Colorado Science Center Joe Arrigo was inspired to bring the work of the Italian genius to the Centennial State. The first North American museum dedicated to the work of the artist, engineer, and theorist is set to open near the Pueblo Convention Center within the next couple of months.

Tread of Pioneers Museum
Curated by Denver artist Danielle SeeWalker (see page 70), *This is Native Art*—at Steamboat Springs' Tread of Pioneers Museum through October 2026—features pieces by more than 35 Native American artists that challenge stereotypes and explore shared Indigenous experiences. Along with work from SeeWalker herself, look for art from Arizona-based Diné creator Garrett Etsitty and bright portraits by Cheyenne-Arapaho painter Brent Learned.

Creede Repertory Theatre
This 60-year-old nonprofit theater company employs more than 70 actors each summer to perform shows like *Xanadu* and *Silent Sky*. The company was set to receive a $20,000 NEA grant to support its Headwaters New Play Program, which develops and produces new plays from artists in the Southwestern United States. The shows will go on without those funds, and you can catch the next season of programming starting in May 2026.

“La Verdad” by Lisa Diamor Sanchez, featured at the 2025 Denver Arts Festival



9

Shop Art Festivals

Whether you’re hunting for a gift or a statement piece that’ll become a family heirloom, these annual markets connect you directly with a variety of creators.

Autumn Artfest, *November 8*
You usually need an invite to see inside the Globeville Riverfront Art Center, a collective of more than 75 visual artists, but on November 8, the center will be open to the public. View works in the gallery by resident artists such as textile artist Francine Campone, who uses upcycled fabrics to create abstract collages, and Heidi West, who does landscape paintings and embroidery. Also explore the open studios to catch the artists in action.

Denver Arts Festival, *May 23 to 24*
Roughly 150 artists will sell paintings, handcrafted furniture, photography, and more at this annual (and free) two-day festival in Central Park’s Conservatory Green. After listening to live music and grabbing grub from a food truck, peruse the selection of woodworkers (like Fort Collins’ Joe Anastasia) or mixed-media works (don’t miss portraits from Denver’s Thomas Elias Lockhart III). Bonus: You get a meal ticket and a free T-shirt if you volunteer to watch an artist’s booth while they’re on a break.

Cherry Creek Arts Festival, *July 3 to 5*
At this highly competitive, free annual event, put on by the creative education nonprofit CherryArts, more than 250 juried artists from around the world set up pop-up shops along the streets of Cherry Creek North.

GIVE TIME

Shayna Larsen, *volunteer for Boulder’s Open Studios, a 30-year-old tour of artist spaces held over three weekends every October*

What do you do in your volunteer role? I make video previews of artists involved for Open Studios’ social media channels. I’ll film them creating their work or talking about their process. My daughter even started a TikTok for Open Studios. **Why do you love it?** I don’t think people understand how many talented artists are in Boulder. I want to help get their art out into the world.

From left: Courtesy of Denver Arts Festival; Geertjanverhoeff/Dreamstime

10

HANG OUT IN ART DISTRICTS

This year, the RiNo Art District gave away $125,000 to eight nonprofits.

When the RiNo Art District started its Social Impact Grants Program in 2020, it was in response to a national reckoning over the murder of George Floyd and the conversations that followed. “We launched the Social Impact Grants Program to actually put our money where our mouth is and support local organizations financially,” says Kiah Butcher, programs manager for the district. Now in its fifth year, the program has distributed more than $350,000 to organizations creating social change in the neighborhoods of Five Points, Globeville, Elyria-Swansea, and Cole. The dollars are unrestricted—unlike with traditional grants—which means recipients can put the cash toward whatever advances their mission, including rent, staffing, or a long-coveted program that never had a budget line. The money comes from RiNo’s Business Improvement District. And as federal arts support dwindles, RiNo’s grants have become a rare source of relief. So where do you come in? “It’s an honor to help fund these organizations’ dreams and passions, but it’s also a call to the general public,” Butcher says. “If you love an artist or a small business [in an art district], go shop there.” ▲

MY HEART WAS
BREAKING

SON OF A BITCH!

HANDS
ARE
SHAKING

BUGS ARE
CRAWLING
ALL OVER ME

TEN YEARS AGO, NATHANIEL RATELIFF & THE NIGHT SWEATS RODE THEIR DEBUT ALBUM FROM THE BLUEBIRD THEATER ALL THE WAY TO JIMMY FALLON'S STAGE IN NEW YORK CITY, LAUNCHING NOT ONLY THEIR OWN CAREERS, BUT ALSO A NEW ERA FOR THE COLORADO MUSIC SCENE.

BY STEVE KNOPPER

ON APRIL 25, 2013, the governor of Colorado walked into the tiny Bluebird Theater on East Colfax Avenue. John Hickenlooper, like most everyone else in the audience, was there to see Joe King, of hit local band the Fray, who was headlining the show in support of his new solo EP. But Hickenlooper also knew the opening act. He liked the singer's soulful folk ballads and, in the past, had even pulled together a few thousand dollars from the National Governors Association budget to pay the obscure musician, who was barely scraping by, to perform at a conference in Colorado Springs. Nathaniel Rateliff, Hickenlooper says, needed all the help he could get.

Hickenlooper settled into the crowd at the Bluebird, waiting to hear Rateliff's gently rasping vocals and soft strumming. But unbeknownst to the governor, Rateliff had, only weeks earlier, discovered a new sound. His performance at the Bluebird would serve as its debut. His voice was rougher; a cobbled-together eight-piece band called the Night Sweats boasted a thumping, blaring horn section; and Rateliff danced across the stage in a spastic James Brown–style jig he'd learned from his mother and perfected during Mercury Cafe's swing nights.

Rateliff capped the set with "S.O.B.," a new tune about an alcoholic's irresistible craving. It started with soft humming and clapping, then slowly swelled into Rateliff screaming, "Son of a bitch, give me a drink!" "He hits the chorus, and every jaw dropped," says Hickenlooper, now a U.S. senator. "The horns came in, and he hit it with a ferocity that I'd never heard from him before. It was almost like time stopped."

Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats played five songs that night. It would take two more years for the tunes to find their way onto the namesake album that transformed the musicians' careers. But for Rateliff, the Bluebird performance was the moment that finally propelled him forward. "After that show," Rateliff says, "I was like, 'Well, I think we're kind of onto something.'"

THE STORY OF *Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats*—the debut album that turned the Denver singer-songwriter into a star who has since collaborated with Paul Simon and Willie Nelson, headlined Red Rocks Amphitheatre almost 20 times, and been called "a leader of the next generation of greats" by Led Zeppelin's Robert Plant—begins in Hermann, Missouri.

Rateliff was raised as an evangelical Christian there, forming a church band with his parents and sister. After his father died in a car wreck, Rateliff dropped out of high school and got a job at Subway, where he befriended a co-worker named Joseph Pope III. The duo headed west with a missionary group—"We thought God wanted us to move to Colorado," Rateliff once said—in 1998, when Rateliff was 18, but they became disenchanted with the cause after proselytizing on a Hopi reservation on Easter Sunday. Instead, Rateliff found work as a yard hostler for a trucking company.

"I HAD THIS LOOSE, SORT OF JOKING IDEA FOR A SONG: EVERYBODY LOVES LIKE A *WHOA-WHOA* OR *AY-OH* OR A SING-ALONG PART. IF WE GET PEOPLE CLAPPING, WE CAN EXTEND OUR SHOW AND JUST KIND OF VAMP ON THESE CHORUSES. AND THAT WAS THE BIRTH OF 'S.O.B.' IT WAS REALLY JUST TO FILL SPACE." —**Nathaniel Rateliff,** on writing "S.O.B."

[redacted]

Clockwise from right: Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats in 2020; Rateliff and Joseph Pope III (*center*) as members of Born in the Flood; the lead singer shows some swagger—and a little skin—on the album cover for *Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats.*

NATHANIEL RATELIFF
& THE NIGHT SWEATS

"Sometimes you feel like, if nobody else is going to believe in it, you've got to believe in it. He and I steeled that in each other at an early age, coming from a place where there was nothing around us to tell us that was possible, other than the undying support of my mother. She gave us a place to play and supported us when we were just trying to make speakers so loud that our bell-bottoms vibrated when we were standing in front of them."

—**Joseph Pope III,** the Night Sweats' bassist and Rateliff's childhood friend

Previous spread: Stefan Hoederath/Getty Images. This page, from top: Courtesy of Nathaniel Rateliff; Karl Gehring/*the Denver Post* via Getty Images

“The very first record, it was Nathaniel and Patrick, and that was it. As far as the Denver crew, we became the band later.”

—**Pope**

Courtesy of Alysse Gafkjen

“WE’VE BEEN LUCKY IN COLORADO TO HAVE PEOPLE WHO’VE COME FROM OTHER PLACES AND CREATED THEIR DREAM HERE.”

—**U.S. Senator John Hickenlooper**

“SOMETHING I LOVE ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIP IS THAT IT’S BASED IN A SINCERE FRIENDSHIP—AND THAT GOES FOR ALL THE NIGHT SWEATS. IT’S WHAT SEPARATES US IN THE STUDIO AND LIVE. WE ENJOY EACH OTHER’S COMPANY AND LOVE EACH OTHER. PEOPLE SEE IT, AND PEOPLE CAN HEAR IT.”

—**Patrick Meese,** the Night Sweats’ drummer

They settled in the Baker neighborhood, near South Broadway, and formed a bluesy rock band called Born in the Flood, building enough of an audience to land prestigious showcases at South by Southwest in Austin, Texas, and at the CMJ indie-rock festival on the East Coast. They also opened for more established bands like Kings of Leon and Andrew Bird. The group found a following at the newly opened Hi-Dive and filled local clubs like the Meadowlark Bar and Larimer Lounge. In 2008, a rep from Rounder Records, an important folk music label, saw Rateliff perform at a showcase in New York City and signed him to a small deal as a singer-songwriter. He put out one album—2010's *In Memory of Loss*, performed in his best Cat Stevens voice—and toured the United States and played several gigs in Europe, often with Pope by his side. But record sales failed to meet expectations, and Rounder dropped him. Rateliff's career seemed to stall. He supported himself between gigs by working as a gardener and landscaper in Denver. At the time, Pope seriously considered abandoning music as a career. "I don't know if I can keep doing this," he told his friend.

In 2012, Rateliff, then 33, had just finished traveling the country as part of Chuck Ragan's Revival tour, which one newspaper called "punk rock's answer to the Traveling Wilburys." He was in bed in Denver, noodling with an Epiphone guitar he liked, contemplating a song he'd covered on the Ragan tour, the Band's "The Shape I'm In." The tune was on the edge of rock and '60s-style R&B, and Rateliff spontaneously sang in a deeper, more gravely register. He soon wrote the lyrics to what became "Trying So Hard Not to Know," including, "You're filling it up just to turn out on empty." "It was a new voice that was within me," Rateliff says. "I was ready to give up."

In those days, Rateliff was a member of a close-knit Denver music scene around South Broadway. It included Pope, drummer Patrick Meese, and the alt-rock duo Tennis. Serendipitously, in April 2013, Rateliff ran into the Fray's King at Sputnik, a bar and restaurant next door to the Hi-Dive, and wound up playing him a few songs in his new style. King invited him to open the Bluebird gig later that month. Rateliff immediately began to "piece a band together," he says. This new group would not play sad, Bon Iver–like songs. Rather, it would be a rock 'n' roll outfit: guitar, bass, drums, keyboards, a lively three-man horn section. Rateliff christened them the Night Sweats.

The new band had just a few days to rehearse and didn't have enough material for even a short set. To fill time, Rateliff figured they needed a sing-along vamp—something like the Lumineers' "Ho Hey"—that could be extended into an onstage jam. He came up with a catchy chorus, which Rateliff describes as a "doo-woppy thing, a cappella, like a boom, clap." The lyrics, however, were full of pain: shaky hands, achy hearts, and bugs "crawling all over me"—a reference to the delirium he'd suffered during alcohol withdrawal. "S.O.B." may be doo-wop, but it disguises a cry for help. "The irony of a song that was kind of a celebrated party song and a drinking song is that it can

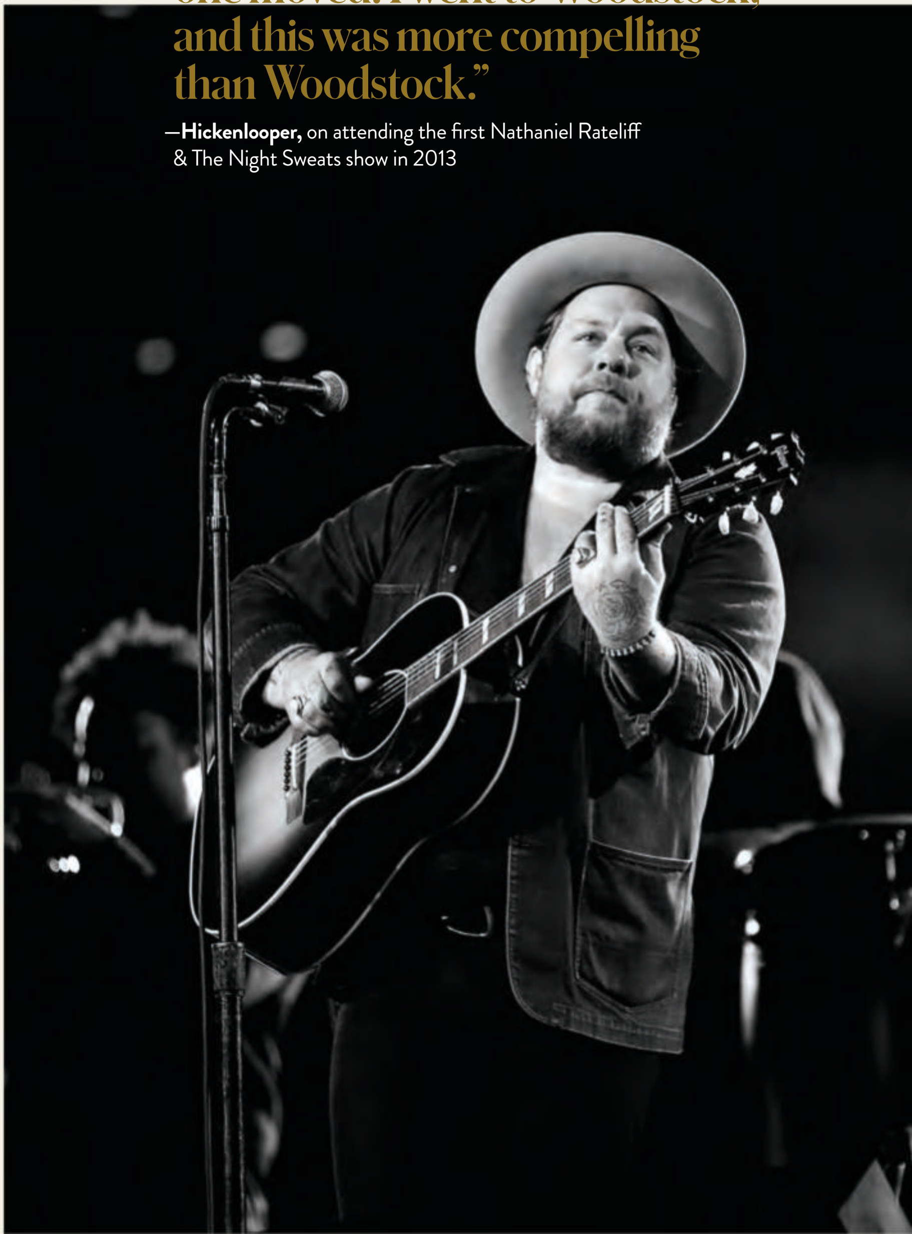
CONTINUED ON PAGE 102

"I LIKE SEEING GOOD PEOPLE WIN."

—**Matt Marshall,** former senior vice president of A&R for Concord Music Group, which released *Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats* on its Stax Records division

"People talk about the first time they saw the Beatles on *Ed Sullivan*. This was that times 1,000. The U2 concert at Red Rocks—this was that times 10,000. They only played five songs, but no one moved. I went to Woodstock, and this was more compelling than Woodstock."

—**Hickenlooper,** on attending the first Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats show in 2013

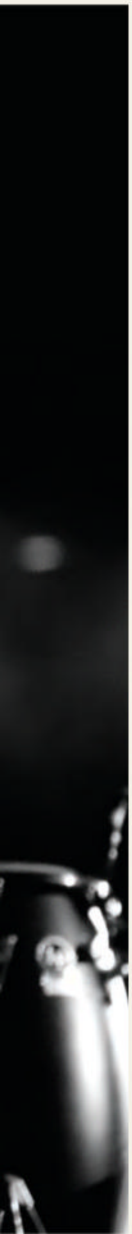


Rich Fury/Getty Images for Visible

“What I take away from Nathaniel is he’s a very down-to-earth guy. The dude is not a rock star. He’s a guy you might see at Blue Pan Pizza, and you’d just say hi to him. He’s very warm and present.”

—**Bret Saunders,** KBCO radio host

From top: Douglas Gorenstein/NBCU Photo Bank/NBCUniversal via Getty Images; Joe Amon/MediaNews Group/*the Denver Post* via Getty Images



“Nathaniel and Joe Pope both came from Missouri, and they grew up in challenging circumstances. For them, Colorado was a refuge, a place they could create the life they had imagined. It wasn’t easy. Nathaniel struggled. He was not getting rich. What I loved about him was, even when he wasn’t making any money, he loved making music.”

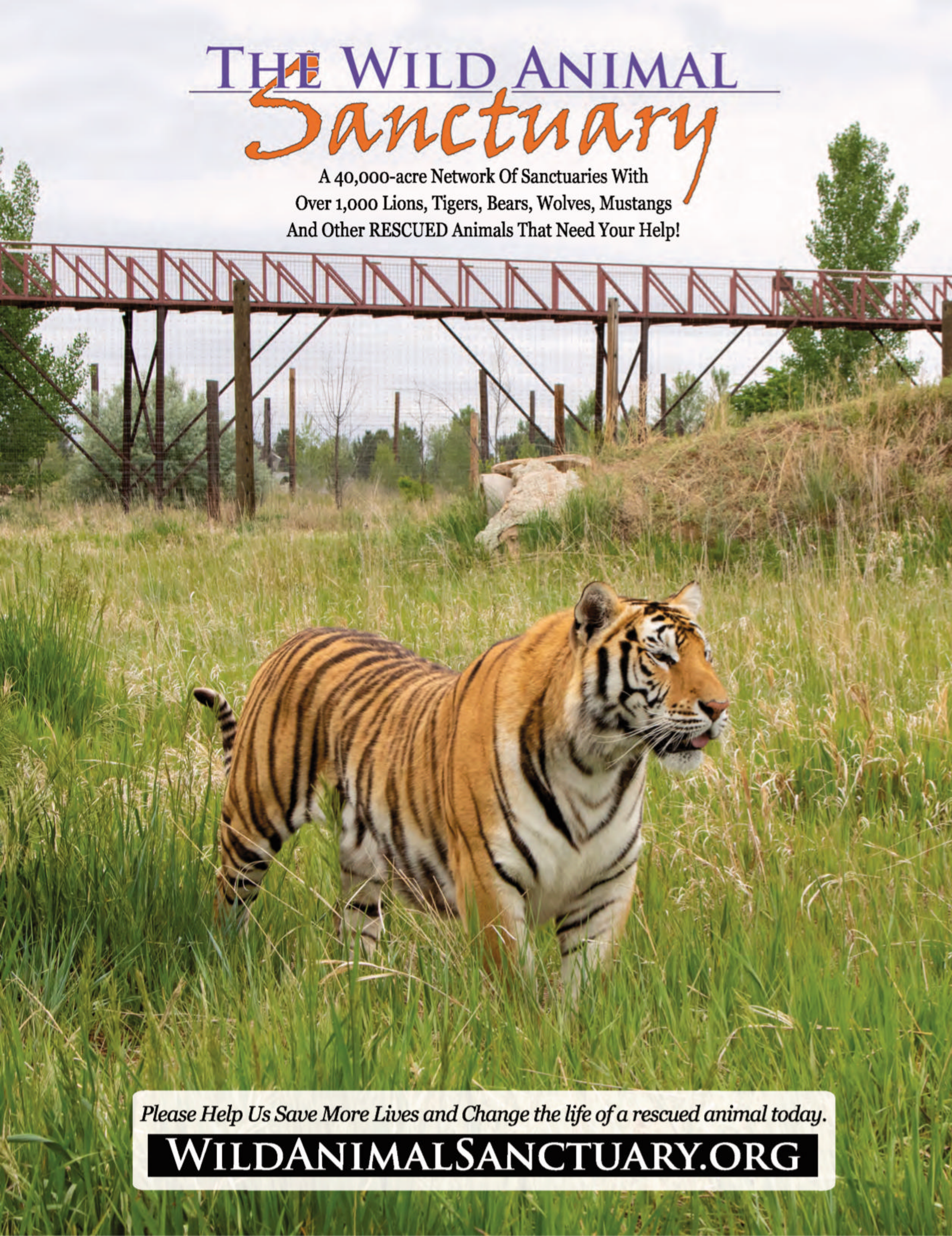
—**Hickenlooper**

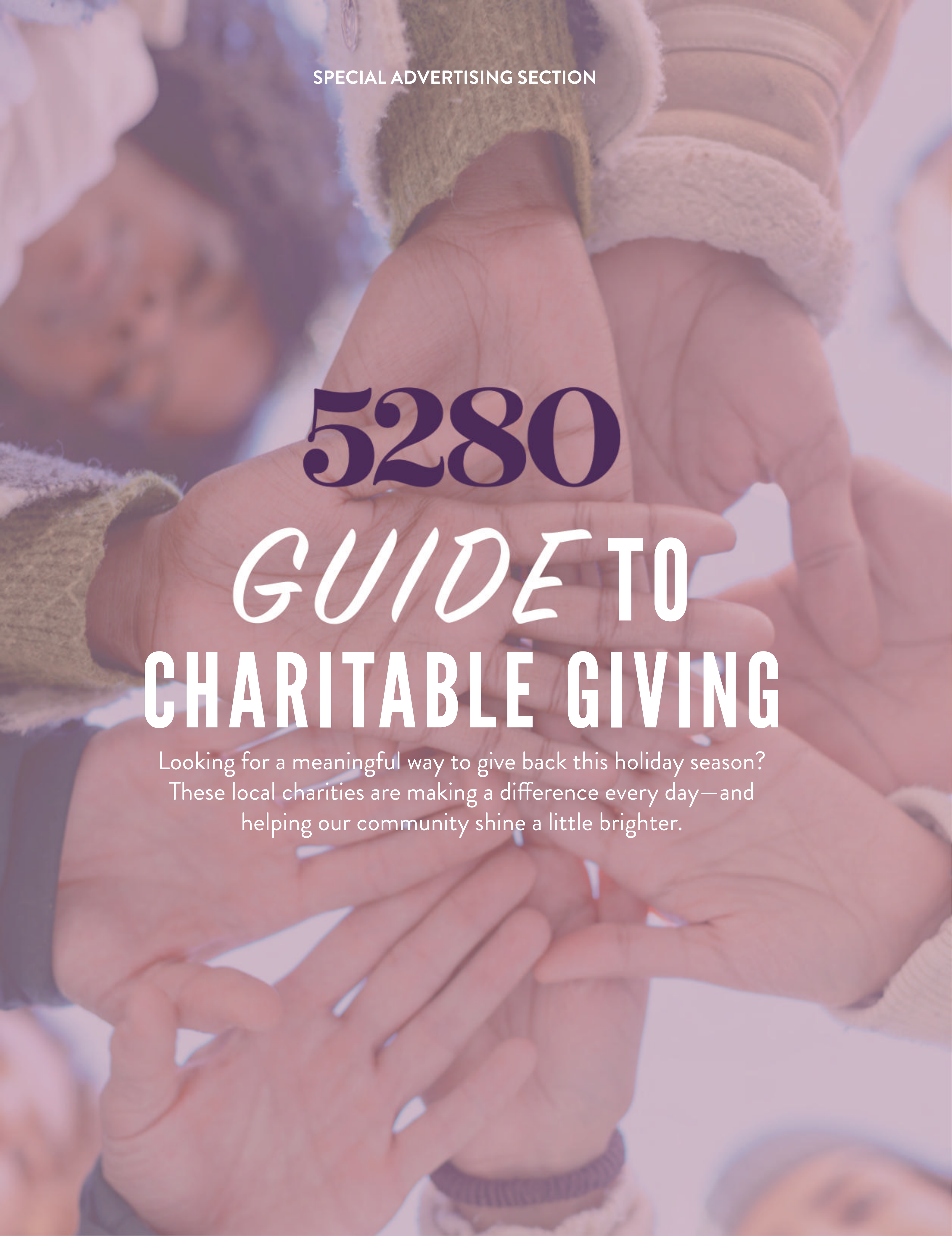
Clockwise from top: Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats sent Jimmy Fallon into a frenzy in 2015; Hickenlooper has long supported Rateliff, and the singer returned the favor when the politician ran for president in 2020; Rateliff at Red Rocks, where he has headlined almost 20 times

“IT’S TOUGHER LOOKING BACK NOW. THAT WAS JUST PART OF OUR SYSTEM. PEOPLE THAT DRINK THE SAME FIND EACH OTHER. THERE’S AN ENERGY TO THAT. THE MORNINGS WERE A LOT OF ME AND NATHANIEL JUST TALKING. RICHARD [SWIFT, OUR PRODUCER] WOULD WANT TO START LATER IN THE DAY, BUT NATHANIEL AND I WOULD BE UP. HE WAS GOING THROUGH A LOT, AND I WAS HAPPY TO BE THERE.”

—**Meese,** on the recording of *Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats* in Cottage Grove, Oregon

“I USED TO GO SWING DANCING AT THE MERCURY CAFE. IT WAS SUNDAYS OR THURSDAYS, AND THAT WAS THE SPOT WHERE EVERYBODY WENT, BACK IN ’97 TO ’98. ASIDE FROM DANCING AT HOME TO RECORDS OR DANCING WITH MY MOM GROWING UP, I WAS PRETTY SHY ABOUT IT. TO DANCE ONSTAGE WAS TERRIFYING AS WELL, BUT PEOPLE REALLY RESPONDED TO IT. I THOUGHT IT WAS HILARIOUS.” —**Rateliff,** on his signature dance moves


THE WILD ANIMAL
Sanctuary
A 40,000-acre Network Of Sanctuaries With
Over 1,000 Lions, Tigers, Bears, Wolves, Mustangs
And Other RESCUED Animals That Need Your Help!
Please Help Us Save More Lives and Change the life of a rescued animal today.
WILDANIMALSANCTUARY.ORG



SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION

5280 GUIDE TO CHARITABLE GIVING

Looking for a meaningful way to give back this holiday season? These local charities are making a difference every day—and helping our community shine a little brighter.

BETHANY CHRISTIAN SERVICES

We believe every child deserves a family. Whether infant, toddler, or teen, kids need families—kids thrive in families. That's why for over 80 years, our faith has inspired us to create safe, stable family environments for children.

KIDS DESERVE TO BE SAFE AND FEEL SAFE

But there are times when families face crises like poverty, homelessness, health issues, or job loss—and their children need care and stability during a difficult time. When children can't stay with their own families, we connect them with loving, temporary foster families that give them the shelter of home until they can be safely reunited with family.

But when reunification with family isn't possible, kids need a long-term foster or adoptive family that can provide a safe place for them to heal, grow, and belong.

WHERE YOU COME IN

Right now, we're experiencing a great shortage of available foster homes, especially for teens and sibling groups. Kids need your support. Not everyone is called to be a foster parent, but we're all called to help. And every gift helps recruit, train, and support more loving foster families for children and teens.

LET CHILDREN FACING CRISIS KNOW THEY'RE NOT ALONE

Together, we can do everything possible to ensure kids have a stable, nurturing family.

Will you give a child the gift of family? Your compassion will change the world one child, one family at a time.

FOR A CHILD IN FOSTER CARE, EVERY DOLLAR, EVERY GIFT COUNTS

- $25 makes sure kids get birthday and holiday gifts so they don't feel forgotten.
- $50 provides clothing, shoes, and supplies to kids who come into care with nothing.
- $100 helps cover extracurricular fees for class trips, sports registration, drivers ed, or prom so kids don't miss out on being kids.
- $150 provides transportation like bus tickets or gas cards so parents can visit their children in foster care, keeping kids connected to their families during a traumatic time.
- $250 helps cover the cost to recruit a loving foster family for a child in need of a safe place to stay.

Thank you for standing with children during some of their darkest moments. Together, we can make a difference.

DONATE NOW!

Learn more about Bethany in Colorado Springs at Bethany.org/ColoradoSprings

Bethany

5585 Erindale Drive, Suite 106
Colorado Springs, CO 80918
(719) 591-7595 | Bethany.org/ColoradoSprings

ADAPTIVE ADVENTURES

When you support Adaptive Adventures, you're not just giving, you're opening the outdoors to someone who thought it was closed to them forever. Imagine losing mobility and being told life will never be the same, only to discover you can kayak in a river, ride a mountain trail, or carve fresh powder. That moment of freedom is priceless. And thanks to you, it's possible.

We are the only fully mobile adaptive outdoor recreation program in the nation, traveling to underserved communities and bringing cutting-edge equipment, skilled instructors, and a spirit of adventure to those who need it most. Every program is free, family inclusive, and designed so no one is left behind.

But Adaptive Adventures is about more than outdoor adventures. Our participants report lower stress, improved mental health, stronger family bonds, and renewed confidence.

Veterans find purpose, caregivers find connection, and children discover that challenges can be overcome.The joy of adventure becomes a pathway to healing.

"Where adventure moves us, community holds us, and joy heals us—freedom begins."

What makes us different? Many of our staff and volunteers have disabilities themselves.They know the fear, the frustration, and the joy of breaking through barriers, making every experience authentic and life-changing.

Your gift doesn't just fund one day on the water or trail. It builds a lifetime of confidence, resilience, and outdoor joy. It ensures that someone, somewhere, discovers the world isn't smaller after disability—it's still wide open.

Be the reason someone heals, belongs, and thrives.Donate today.

Adaptive adventures

9053 Harlan Street, Suite 34
Westminster, CO 80031
(303) 679-2770
AdaptiveAdventures.org

Animal Rescue of the Rockies pulls homeless pets from overcrowded shelters, places them in foster homes, and adopts them to loving forever homes. Since 2003, ARR has rescued well over 10,000 dogs and cats at risk of euthanasia. We're a foster-home-based rescue—we believe pets are happier and better socialized when they stay in a foster home vs. a kennel environment.

Learn more about Animal Rescue of the Rockies at

ARRCOLORADO.ORG

MAKE THIS THEIR BEST YEAR EVER! HELP HOMELESS PETS FIND THEIR FOREVER HOMES.

DOUBLE YOUR GIFT ON COLORADO GIVES DAY WITH MATCHING GIFTS UP TO $20,000!

Your gift goes directly toward veterinary care, food, and supplies for homeless pets in need. You'll be helping pets and people to share what we all need most right now—LOVE!

SCAN THE QR CODE TO MAKE A DONATION AND SAVE A LIFE!

Or go to www.coloradogives.org/organization/AnimalRescueRockies

MAILING ADDRESS:
13918 E. Mississippi Ave., #60188
Aurora, CO 80012
(970) 389-8324

ARR'S CAT CASITA AT HIGH PAW PET SUPPLIES:
503 U.S. Hwy 285, Fairplay, CO 80440
(719) 836-4909

RESCUE FOSTER ADOPT

ANIMAL RESCUE OF THE ROCKIES

COLORADO VETERANS PROJECT
COLORADO VETERANS PROJECT
COLORADO VETERANS PROJECT

COLORADO VETERANS PROJECT

Giving to Colorado Veterans Project (CVP) is more than a donation, it is an investment in the people who sacrificed to protect our freedom and in the strength of Colorado's communities. Each year, thousands of service members leave active duty and face the challenge of translating their military experience into meaningful civilian careers. CVP serves as a vital bridge in that transition, connecting veterans with programs that help them define a new mission, discover fulfilling careers, and build the skills needed for long-term stability.

Your support fuels initiatives that link veterans with training opportunities and employers eager to hire individuals who exemplify leadership, loyalty, and resilience. These qualities, forged in service, are invaluable to companies seeking to grow and innovate. By supporting CVP, you are investing not only in the success of veterans, but also in the future of local businesses and Colorado's economy.

The impact of your generosity goes far beyond employment. It helps veterans secure stability, strengthen families, and reinforce the fabric of our communities. Each veteran who thrives becomes a leader, a neighbor, and a role model - proof that service continues long after the uniform is retired.

When you give to Colorado Veterans Project, you honor those who have served and ensure they can continue to lead, excel, and prosper in civilian life. Your support truly serves those who have served.

Your gift empowers veterans to find purpose beyond service—building careers, strengthening families, and fueling Colorado's future.

COLORADO VETERANS PROJECT

8547 E. Arapahoe Road, Suite. J-547, Greenwood Village, CO
80112 • 303.351.1479 • coloradoveteransproject.org

CHELSEA HUTCHISON FOUNDATION

The Chelsea Hutchison Foundation (CHF) grants comfort and hope to those affected by epilepsy through providing tangible monitoring resources, vital information, and a safe haven for conversation and community. Our main goal is to raise awareness of SUDEP and to make a positive difference in the lives of individuals and families living with epilepsy. We raise funds to provide seizure response service dog grants, lifesaving movement monitors that help to protect against SUDEP, and so much more.

P.O. Box 630048, Littleton, CO 80163
(303) 250-7739
chelseahutchisonfoundation.org

CITIZENS PROJECT

Citizens Project is working with passionate neighbors who understand that vibrant, inclusive democracies lead to better outcomes for everyone. Since 1992, our vision is for a Pikes Peak region where individual rights are safeguarded for years to come by everyone making their voices heard in local elections. Join us in eliminating the voter apathy that's been driven by a lack of information on candidates and issues. Thank you for empowering through education, for building communities, and for protecting democracy!

322 N. Tejon St, No.202, Colorado Springs, CO,
80903 • 719.270.0252 • citizensproject.org

COBALT ADVOCATES

Nothing should stand between you and your health decisions, which is why Cobalt is dedicated to fighting for systems, structures, and policies that guarantee reproductive rights and protect comprehensive, universal access to reproductive healthcare, including abortion. Cobalt's vision is for every Coloradan to be able to make any health decision that is right for them, knowing that they can do so free from judgment and that any resource they may need will be available. Learn more at www.cobaltadvocates.org.

cobalt

cobaltadvocates.org

DENVER URBAN GARDENS (DUG)

DUG gardens are rooted in generosity, not profit. Keeping over 200 gardens and food forests alive requires genuine community support: the time, the tools, the training, and dedicated team to back it all up. Your tax-deductible gift to Denver Urban Gardens helps us empower more Denverites to grow fresh and healthy food! Make a gift today at dug.org/give

DUG DENVER URBAN GARDENS

1031 33rd Street, Suite 100
Denver, CO 80205
(303) 292-9900 • dug.org/donate

THE
Children's Diabetes Foundation

SUPPORT • AWARENESS • RESEARCH

Type 1 Diabetes does not discriminate. It could affect anyone with no family history, no matter their race, and no matter their economic status.

At the Children's Diabetes Foundation, we meet people with T1D where they are, and we offer resources and programs that support patients with financial needs, as well as emotional support.

Your donation helps fund advancements in groundbreaking research, along with providing vital patient support services and educating the community about Type 1 Diabetes.

DONATE TODAY →

Children's Diabetes Foundation

DENVER RESCUE MISSION

Hope Starts Here.

Last year alone, the Mission helped 627 individuals obtain stable housing with specialized intake for the New Life Program and case management planning for long-term stability. We also served more than 1.2 million meals and 454,000 nights of shelter to the most vulnerable in our community.

We help restore the lives of people experiencing homelessness and addiction through emergency services, rehabilitation, transitional programs, and community outreach across Denver and Northern Colorado.

Donations are vital! When you give to the Mission, you are providing for the immediate needs of people experiencing homelessness through warm meals and safe shelter, as well as life-changing opportunities to guide men, women, and children on their pathway out of homelessness. Help us end homelessness, one life at time—donate today.

Our mission statement: Denver Rescue Mission is changing lives in the name of Christ by meeting people at their physical and spiritual points of need with the goal of returning them to society as productive, self-sufficient citizens.

DENVER
RESCUE
MISSION

6100 Smith Road, Denver, CO 80216
(303) 297-1815 • denverrescuemission.org

EMILY GRIFFITH FOUNDATION

Emily Griffith Foundation fuels opportunity and expands access to education by supporting students and programs at Emily Griffith Technical College. Through scholarships, essentials & emergencies funds, and other wraparound supports, the Foundation empowers students–many of whom are the first in their familiesto attend college–to gain skills, credentials, and careers that lead to economic mobility. Donors who give to the Foundation help hardworking students transform their lives, and contribute to strengthening Colorado's workforce and communities for generations to come.

1860 Lincoln St. Suite 605 Denver, CO 80203
720.423.4860 • egfoundation.org

GOLDEN PANTRY & THRIFT

Since 1965, Golden Pantry and Thrift has stood beside Golden families in times of hardship. More than a pantry, we are a lifeline, providing nourishing food, affordable thrift goods, crisis support, and community programs that uplift our community to ensure no one faces hardship alone. Join us in building a stronger community, because no neighbor should face hunger or homelessness alone.Together, we are building a stronger, more caring community.

1401 Ford St.,Golden, CO 80401
303.279.5674
goldenpantryandthrift.org
info@goldenpantryandthrift.org

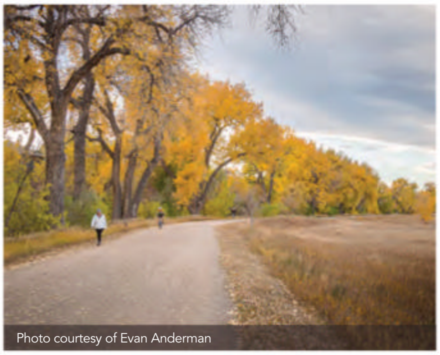


Photo courtesy of Evan Anderman

HIGH LINE CANAL CONSERVANCY

The High Line Canal Conservancy is preserving and enhancing Denver metro's 71-mile High Line Canal—one of the nation's longest urban trails. In collaboration with government partners and community members, the Conservancy is ensuring the Canal is a permanently protected, thriving space for people and nature. Join with High Line Heroes from across the region to support trail improvements, safer crossings, trash and brush cleanups, and a variety of recreational and educational programs for over one million users annually.

4010 E. Orchard Road, Centennial, CO 80121
720.767.2452 • highlinecanal.org

HUNGER FREE COLORADO

Help end hunger in your community this season. Hunger Free Colorado connects people to food resources statewide and drives policy change to end hunger. We help thousands access SNAP and other programs to ensure Coloradans can obtain nutritious, culturally relevant food and work to transform food systems to make them more equitable and just. Through community-driven policy, including the passage of Healthy School Meals for All, we've shown a path forward based on building community power to drive transformational change.

3840 York Street, Suite 245
Denver, CO 80205
(720) 328-1284
hungerfreecolorado.org

Donate today! Visit our online guide at 5280.com for more information.

Give today to change someone’s tomorrow.

The need is great, and the moment is urgent. Be a part of the statewide movement of Colorado Gives Day to support what matters most to you. With thousands of nonprofits to choose from, it’s easily the best day to give.

December 9

COLORADO GIVESDAY

Give early at
ColoradoGivesDay.org

FOOD FOR THOUGHT DENVER

In 2012, longtime Denver resident Bob Bell founded Food for Thought Denver after learning a heartbreaking truth: Many children in our community arrive at school on Mondays hungry, having gone without enough food over the weekend. Bob felt compelled to act after hearing a school principal describe the reality so many families face, and Food for Thought Denver was born out of this deep concern and a desire to make a difference.

Our mission is simple but profound: to ensure no Denver-area child goes hungry over the weekend. Every Friday during the school year, volunteers—including individuals, students, corporate teams, and friends—come together at two packing sites to fill PowerSacks, each with enough food to feed a family of four through the weekend. These PowerSacks are then distributed to every child in our 75 participating schools so that each student returns to school nourished and ready to learn.

At Food for Thought Denver, we are committed to making the most of every gift we receive. We remain a 100% volunteer-run organization, with no paid staff, and our generous Board of Directors and supporters cover all of our operating expenses. This unique structure allows every dollar donated to go directly to putting food on the tables of the children and families we serve.

"We believe that when a community comes together around the simple but essential goal of ensuring no child is hungry, lasting change is possible. Volunteers, donors, and supporters alike are united in the hope that together, we can end weekend hunger for all children in the Denver metro area."
— Bob Bell, Food for Thought founder

Food For Thought
DENVER

P.O. Box 11813, Denver, CO 08211
720.201.9192 • foodforthoughtdenver.org

LOVE INC LITTLETON

With the help of hundreds of volunteers and churches, Love INC Littleton offers a hand up, not a handout, to those in need.

Love INC serves the local community through the **Connection Center** (helpline), **Renewed Treasures** (award-winning resale boutique), and **IMPACT program** (life skills classes and community).

As part of the Denver area for 17-plus years, Love INC provides care for the *whole* person. Your gift improves lives!

love in the name of Christ | Littleton

P.O. Box 787, Littleton, CO 80160
(303) 798-0037 | LoveIncLittleton.org

Photo By: Ethan Herrold, TNC Photo Contest 2019

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

Every acre, every river mile, and every species protected begins with you. To address the complex challenges facing our planet, we need ambitious and innovative solutions. By supporting The Nature Conservancy, you're supporting a future where nature and people thrive.

Join us to make a difference for Colorado's future.

The Nature Conservancy
Colorado

2424 Spruce St., Boulder, CO 80302
(303) 444-2950
nature.org/colorado

NOURISH MEALS ON WHEELS

One in eight older adults faces hunger, and too many endure lonely days without companionship. Nourish volunteers deliver more than food. They bring care, connection, and hope across south metro Denver. For many, it's the only knock on the door all day. We honor every individual by preparing meals that fit their needs. Together, we can ensure no older adult faces hunger or isolation alone. Join Nourish today and help turn silent nights into meaningful moments of community.

Nourish
Meals on Wheels

92 E. Arapahoe Road, Littleton, CO 80122
(303) 798-7642 • nourishmealsonwheels.org

SISTER CARMEN COMMUNITY CENTER

Sister Carmen Community Center is a non-religious family resource center serving Lafayette, Louisville, Superior, and Erie residents in need—without discrimination. We provide food, rent, utilities, clothing, resource connections, and family-strengthening programs like parenting, digital literacy, and workforce development. In 2024, our food bank and garden distributed 1.4 million pounds of food to 2,300 households. With government funding down, we're turning to our community to help fill the gap.

Donate now at: www.sistercarmen.org

Sister Carmen
COMMUNITY CENTER

655 Aspen Ridge Drive, Lafayette, CO 80026
(303) 665-4342 • sistercarmen.org

At Pepper's, our mission is to provide a compassionate, loving, lifelong home where elderly dogs are cared for during their good days, bad days, and last days.

PEPPER'S EXISTS TO HELP EASE THE OVERCROWDING OF LOCAL SHELTERS WHILE PROVIDING QUALITY LIFELONG CARE TO DOGS WHO MAY HAVE OTHERWISE BEEN EUTHANIZED.

Scan code or visit the website below to donate to Pepper's Senior Dog Sanctuary on Colorado Gives Day

COLORADOGIVES.ORG/ORGANIZATION/PEPPERSSENIORDOGSANCTUARY

PEPPER'S
SENIOR DOG SANCTUARY

7000 Roxborough Park Rd, Littleton, CO 80125
303.222.0082 🐾 psds.org

FREEDOM SERVICE DOGS

At Freedom Service Dogs, we believe dogs can make a profound difference in the everyday lives of people challenged by disabilities. We breed and custom-train service dogs, professional therapy dogs, and skilled companions – each one placed with the individual or situation for which it is best suited. We serve individuals with limited mobility, young people with autism, veterans or first responders with PTSD or traumatic brain injuries, and others providing mental health and crisis support. Freedom Service Dogs is an Assistance Dogs International-accredited organization, and we adhere to the highest standards of training, client service, dog health, safety, and wellbeing.

Your support allows us to partner more life-changing dogs with people in need and provide lifetime support services, at no cost to those we serve.

"My service dog Shuri is part of me, and I have been able to travel, go to public events, and enjoy making special memories with my family again because of her. I have new confidence and I feel like I can face this world with a new outlook and be successful in anything I do with her by my side. Freedom Service Dogs truly gave me my life back."

–Imna, U.S. Marine Corps Veteran

FREEDOM SERVICE DOGS OF AMERICA

7193 S. Dillon Court, Englewood, CO 80112
(303) 922-6231 | freedomservicedogs.org

FOCUS POINTS FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

Every family has the potential to succeed. At Focus Points, we equip participants with the skills, tools, and confidence to reach their goals in education, careers, and community life.

Lupita is one of many parents who began in our Parents as Teachers (PAT) and Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) programs, which prepare caregivers to deliver kindergarten-ready learning at home. Inspired by her children's growth, she became a HIPPY educator herself, helping other families thrive.

Over the past eight years as both a parent and an educator at Focus Points, Lupita has gained the tools and knowledge to become a strong advocate—not only for her own children, but also for the families she serves. Thanks to Focus Points' evidence-based, tailored lessons, her children entered school well prepared, with her oldest now pursuing a college degree. Beyond education, Lupita felt empowered to follow her entrepreneurial dream: launching a thriving floral arrangement business.

Each year, we serve 300–400 families like Lupita's with life-changing programs in early childhood education, workforce development, basic needs support, older adult services, and access to fresh, healthy food through our "pay-what-you-can" farmers' market in the heart of the Globeville-Elyria-Swansea neighborhoods.

As we celebrate 30 years of community-centered service in Denver, your Colorado Gives Day gift matters more than ever. Your generosity equips and empowers Colorado families during this critical time, ensuring they have the resources they need to thrive.

Join us in building stronger families—and stronger communities—right here in Denver.

Focus Points FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

2501 E. 48th Avenue, Denver, Colorado 80216
(303) 292-0770 • focuspoints.org

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHILDREN'S HEALTH FOUNDATION

Navigating life with an infant or child with a health condition can be overwhelming, and at Rocky Mountain Children's Health Foundation, we get it. No family should face their child's medical journey alone or have to worry about meeting essential needs along the way. We provide the financial, nutritional, and emotional support these families need to keep moving forward.

When your child is in the hospital, everyday costs you used to take for granted quickly become overwhelming. Many families must choose between staying with their child or going to work to cover their daily expenses. The emotional and financial hardship these families endure is unthinkable—and that's where we come in.

We help families meet their essential needs, putting relief and stability within reach. Every family's situation is unique, so we tailor the way we support each family to fit what they need. Sometimes, it's a rent payment so parents can take time off work during their child's cancer treatment. Other times, it's gas to get to doctor's appointments, groceries, or medications. For infants in neonatal ICUs, it's the nutritional support of donor milk. For kids facing scary procedures, it's the comfort of a furry friend through our hospital and companion dog programs.

With costs on the rise, the need to support these children and families is only growing. With your help, we can ensure every family in our community feels supported throughout their child's medical journey. Because when we do, they can focus on what really matters: their child.

Rocky Mountain Children's Health FOUNDATION

5394 Marshall Street, Suite 400, Arvada, CO 80002
(303) 839-6782 • rmchildren.org

Donate today! Visit our online guide at 5280.com for more information.

WE DON'T WASTE

We Don't Waste believes that nutritious food should go to people, not landfills. Forty percent of food produced in the U.S. ends up in the landfill, yet up to one in seven Coloradans will experience food insecurity at some point this year. We Don't Waste reduces hunger and food waste in the Denver area by recovering quality, unused food from local businesses and distributing it free of charge to food pantries, schools, shelters, and more, as well as directly to the community through their Mobile Food Markets. By recovering food that would have otherwise gone to waste, We Don't Waste is also protecting our planet from greenhouse gases produced by food rotting in landfills. Since 2009, We Don't Waste has recovered and distributed over 245 million servings of food.

We Don't Waste is a simple, innovative concept that has met a vital need within our community. In addition to the core programs of food recovery and distribution, We Don't Waste has an active education and advocacy team that teaches thousands of students each year about nutrition, the environmental impact of food waste, and creative ways we can all reduce our food waste. Together, we can end food insecurity and food waste in our community. YOU can help us achieve our vision!

6090 E. 39th Avenue, Denver, CO 80207
(720) 443-6113 • wedontwaste.org

PROJECT ANGEL HEART

Project Angel Heart's purpose is to deliver comfort and support through high-quality nutrition services, including medically tailored meals, while also advocating for the principles of "Food is medicine." Regardless of a person's background or circumstances, Project Angel Heart believes everyone should have access to the nutrition they need—especially when they're sick. Each week in Project Angel Heart's kitchen, they create meals from scratch, made in partnership with registered dietitians, that are tailored to meet the specific dietary needs of people living with severe illnesses such as cancer, heart failure, HIV/AIDS, and more. *This year, Project Angel Heart will home-deliver 815,000 meals to neighbors in need across Colorado.*

A Project Angel Heart Story of Impact:
For the past 12 years, Ann has been caring for her mother, Mary. This reality is one many families know too well: the shifting roles between parent and child and the constant balancing act of caregiving alongside work, children, and daily life. Now 90 years old, Mary is living with multiple chronic conditions, including high blood pressure, heart disease, osteoporosis, and diabetes. She's on oxygen around the clock, takes a long list of medications, and struggles with limited use of her hands and feet. When Ann retired two years ago, she thought she would have more time to devote to caring for her mom. But like many in the "sandwich generation," her responsibilities multiplied. While caring for her elderly mother, Ann also helps care for her young grandson when her son works overnight shifts. The weight of responsibility was heavy, and Ann knew she needed help. That's when she talked to Project Angel Heart about their medically tailored meal program. Mary has now had Project Angel Heart meals home-delivered for seven months, and the impact has been immediate. Mary's diabetes requires her to carefully monitor her diet, limiting sugar, salt, and pork. Project Angel Heart's chefs craft each meal to fit her nutritional needs, which takes away the guesswork and relieves stress from Ann. "She gets balanced, healthy meals with the nutrients she needs for her conditions," Ann said. For Ann, Project Angel Heart's meals aren't just food on the table. They provide freedom and reassurance. "If I'm with my grandson, I don't have to worry. She has meals she can microwave on her own," Ann said. "It's helped me so much with my time and peace of mind."

Gobble Gobble Give.
This Thanksgiving, give thanks by delivering meals directly to severely ill neighbors in need like Mary. *Project Angel Heart is organizing their biggest delivery day of the year on Wednesday, Nov. 26, just in time for Thanksgiving.* They need 400 volunteers to make it happen—lots of roles, lots of shifts, lots of joy! Deliver meals with your family. Package meals with your friends. Join in! Not able to volunteer? Make a gift to provide meals instead.

Learn more at ProjectAngelHeart.org/gobble

Project Angel Heart

DENVER OFFICE & KITCHEN
4950 Washington Street, Denver, CO 80216
(303) 830-0202
projectangelheart.org

WANT TO SEE YOUR NON-PROFIT FEATURED HERE?

SHARE YOUR NON-PROFIT'S MISSION WITH *5280* READERS.

To learn more, contact us at advertising@5280.com or 303-832-5280.

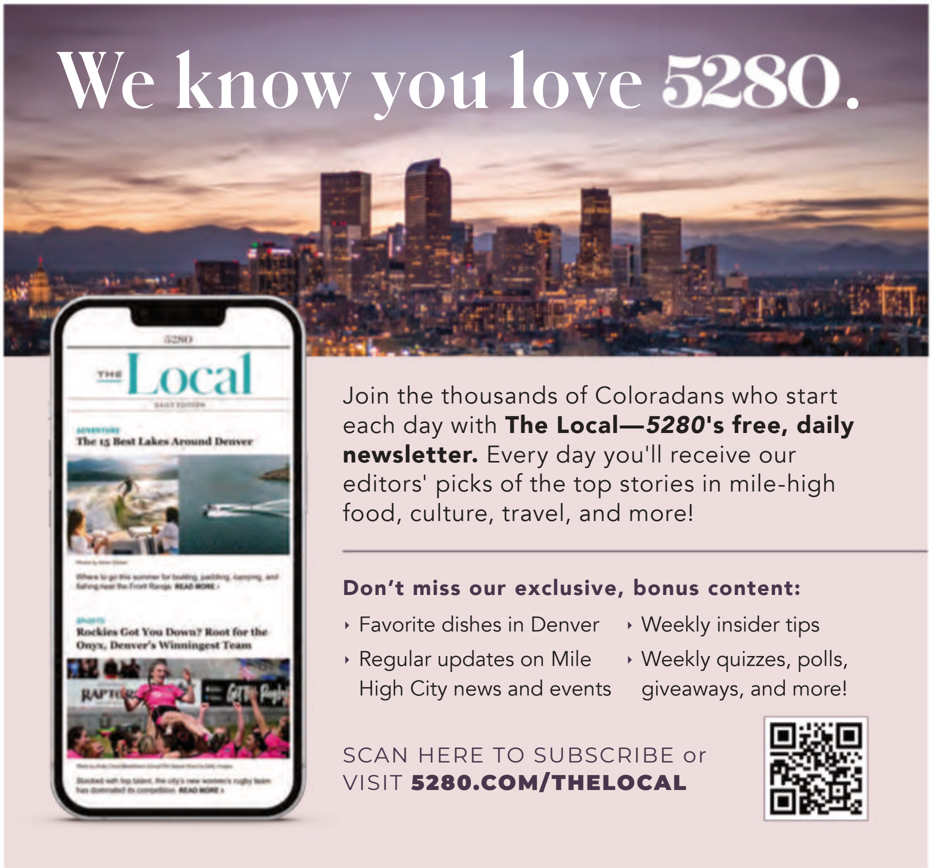
THE WILD ANIMAL SANCTUARY

A 40,000-acre network of sanctuaries with over 1,000 lions, tigers, bears, wolves, and other rescued animals.

Please help us save more lives!

The Wild Animal Sanctuary

1946 County Road 53
Keenesburg, CO 80643
(303) 536-0118
wildanimalsanctuary.org



Join the thousands of Coloradans who start each day with **The Local—*5280*'s free, daily newsletter.** Every day you'll receive our editors' picks of the top stories in mile-high food, culture, travel, and more!

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- Favorite dishes in Denver
- Regular updates on Mile High City news and events
- Weekly insider tips
- Weekly quizzes, polls, giveaways, and more!

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CARIN' CLINIC

Carin' Clinic is a not-for-profit Medical Home for children founded in 1993. Carin' Clinic was created by two school nurses (Karen Pramenko and Karen Conner) who found many of the students they were responsible for could not get needed vaccines, care for minor illnesses or sports physicals due to lack of health insurance. They collaborated with Dr. Vicki Erickson to provide care for these children.

Carin' Clinic began in the corner of a school gymnasium open 3 half-days per week. The clinic grew and expanded to meet the needs of our patients. We now are a provider for children with Medicaid or CHP+, as well as continuing to serve children without any health insurance.

We pride ourselves in caring for the "whole child" by providing excellent health care, as well as addressing other issues the family may have such as lack of food, unstable housing, lack of transportation, etc. We also have an on-site counselor from JCMH.

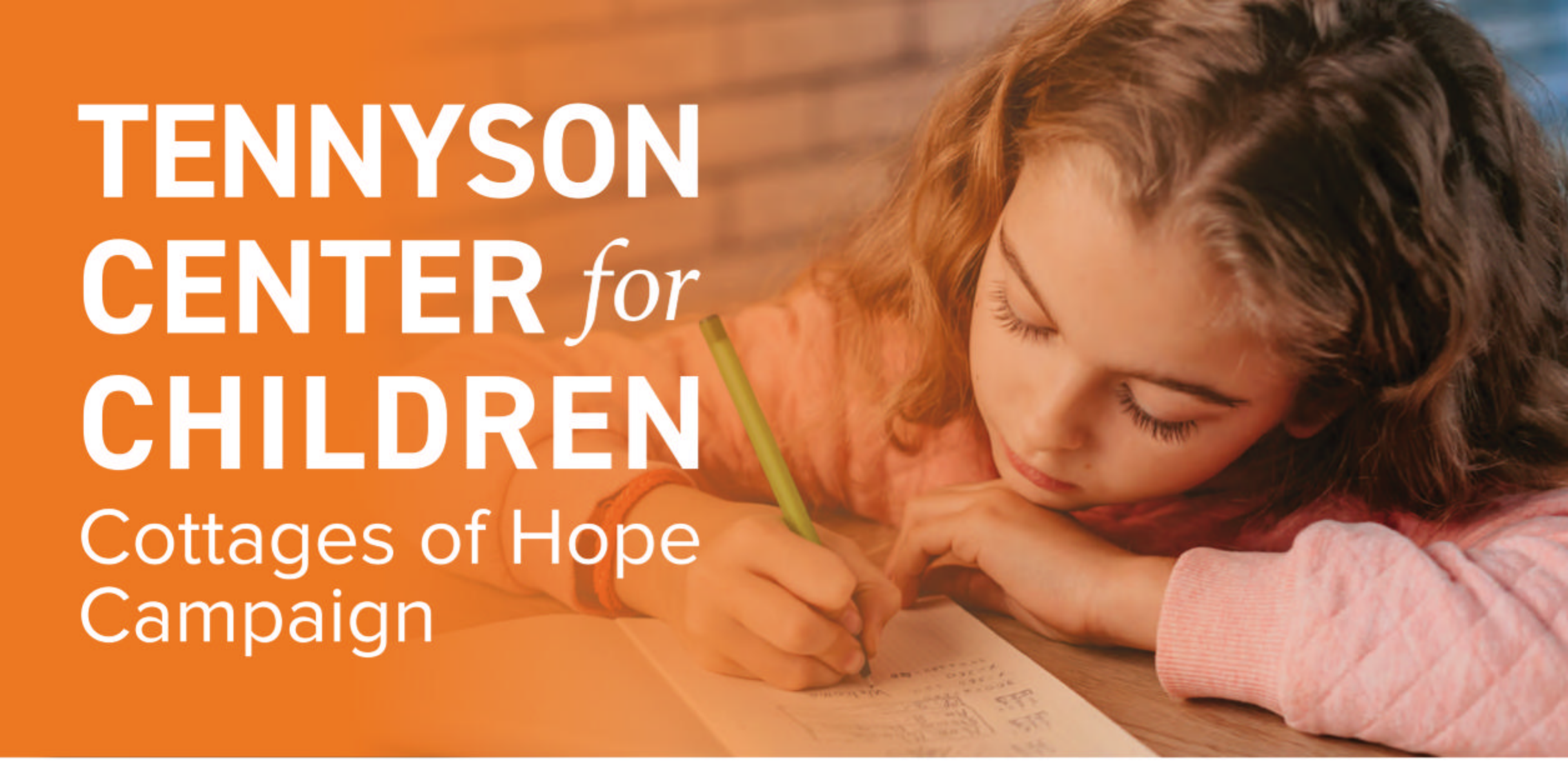
Payments from Medicaid and CHP+ do not cover the complete cost of the care we provide, and donations help us to cover those costs, as well as cover our children without insurance. Donations currently make up about 12% of our budget, but with current uncertainties regarding other grants we have received, our goal is to increase our donations and number of donors to the clinic.

THANK YOU for helping us take care of these vulnerable children!

We appreciate every donation. Please text "**5280Give**" to 844-844-6844, or visit our website at **carinclinic.com**

Carin' Clinic

5150 Allison Street, Arvada, CO 80002
303.423.8836 • carinclinic.com



TENNYSON CENTER *for* CHILDREN

Cottages of Hope Campaign

121 Years of Healing, One Cottage at a Time

Tennyson Center for Children is a refuge for Colorado's most vulnerable children — those who have endured traumas of abuse, neglect and family disruption. Tennyson's cottages provide a safe, therapeutic home for kids ages 6–16 with developmental and mental health challenges — but they're in urgent need of renovation.

A Campaign for Healing Environments

Join our **Cottages of Hope** campaign to transform these homes. Every fresh coat of paint, every comforting space tells a child: **You are safe. You are valued. Your future matters.**

> "When I first came here, I didn't think anyone cared. But my cottage felt like home. It was the first place I felt safe enough to sleep through the night."
>
> Former Tennyson Cottages Resident

Every Gift Creates a Place of Healing

$10,000
renovates a bedroom — giving a child a safe, personal space to call their own.

$5,000
outfits a kitchen and dining area for "first-meal" celebrations.

$2,500
builds a creative corner stocked with art supplies and therapy tools.

$100
provides comfort essentials like soft bedding and warm blankets.

Be a game-changer. Be a hope-builder. Invest in renovating a cottage and rebuilding a future. Donate at tennysoncenter.org/donate.

TENNYSON
CENTER *for*
CHILDREN

To discuss partnerships, contact Stephanie Hearn at 720-226-6709 or stephanie.hearn@tennysoncenter.org.

Gifts to Tennyson are eligible for the Colorado Child Care Contribution Tax Credit, allowing individuals, estates, trusts or corporations to claim a 50% credit on state income taxes for qualifying contributions up to $100,000.

(303) 433-2541 | TENNYSONCENTER.ORG | INFO@TENNYSONCENTER.ORG

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Whether you're dreaming of sipping wine in Italy, exploring Tokyo by bullet train, or experiencing the magic of the holidays in Canada, *5280* Travel Club has a curated journey waiting for you. In 2026, we're offering unforgettable trips across Europe, Africa, Asia, and North America—each designed with immersive activities, expert guides, and seamless travel experiences. Join fellow *5280* readers on these exclusive, limited-capacity getaways—and make memories that will last a lifetime. **View full itineraries, pricing, and reserve your spot today at 5280.COM/TRAVELCLUB.**

Hawaii Three Island Adventure

HAWAII | MARCH 10-18, 2026 | 9 DAYS

Experience the best of Hawaii on this 3-island adventure featuring first-class accommodations across Oahu, the Big Island, and Maui, with guided visits to Pearl Harbor, Volcanoes National Park, a traditional Hawaiian luau, and more. Enjoy a seamless journey with included inter-island flights, sightseeing tours, and time to relax in paradise.

Great Trains and Grand Canyons

ARIZONA | MARCH 15-20, 2026 | 6 DAYS

Ride the rails through Arizona's most stunning landscapes on this 6-day adventure featuring two historic train journeys—the Grand Canyon Railway and the Verde Canyon Railroad—paired with guided sightseeing in Sedona, Jerome, and Montezuma Castle. Enjoy scenic drives, cultural landmarks, and Western-style entertainment.

Culinary Tour Through Tuscany + Florence

ITALY | MARCH 17-25, 2026 | 9 DAYS

Savor the flavors and scenery of Italy on this culinary tour through Tuscany and Florence, featuring wine tastings, a pasta-making class, and guided visits to hill towns like Siena, San Gimignano, and Volterra. Enjoy a Tuscan estate dinner, local farm experiences, and Florence's cultural treasures while staying in charming, first-class accommodations.

Discover Japan by Bullet Train

JAPAN | MAY 7-18, 2026 | 12 DAYS

Embark on a guided tour of Japan by high-speed bullet train, featuring Tokyo, Kyoto, Hiroshima, and Osaka, with cultural experiences like sushi making, a tea ceremony, and a Geisha show. Highlights include Mt. Fuji, vibrant markets, temples, and culinary adventures throughout Japan's most iconic cities.

Alaska: Call of the Wild

ALASKA | JULY 16-22, 2026 | 7 DAYS

Explore Alaska's breathtaking wilderness on a 7-day land journey featuring Anchorage, Denali National Park, a scenic domed rail ride, and a glacier and wildlife cruise in Kenai Fjords National Park. Spot wildlife like bears and moose, experience rugged landscapes, and enjoy unforgettable excursions by rail, coach, and boat.

South Africa & Victoria Falls Adventure

AFRICA | OCTOBER 30-NOVEMBER 11, 2026 | 13 DAYS

Explore South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Botswana on an African adventure featuring Cape Town, Victoria Falls, and enjoy multiple game drives in renowned reserves like Dinokeng and Chobe National Park, with opportunities to see elephants, lions, rhinos, and other African wildlife.

SUPER POPULAR!

Switzerland & Rhine Christmas Markets River Cruise

SWITZERLAND + FRANCE + GERMANY | NOVEMBER 30-DECEMBER 8, 2026

Celebrate the season on a festive river cruise through Switzerland, France, and Germany, featuring charming Christmas markets, guided city tours, and scenic stops along the Rhine. Enjoy holiday cheer with mulled wine, traditional treats, and cultural highlights in Lucerne, Strasbourg, Cologne, and more.

Montreal & Quebec City Christmas

CANADA | NOVEMBER 30-DECEMBER 5, 2026

Experience the magic of Montreal and Quebec City during the Christmas season with a 4-day tour featuring iconic attractions like the Chateau Frontenac, Notre Dame Cathedral, Underground City, and Old Quebec's Christmas Market, plus scenic rail travel through Canada's winter landscape.

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Dining Guide

PRICE KEY
Average Entrée

$	under $15
$$	$16 to $20
$$$	$21 to $30
$$$$	$31 and higher

SYMBOL KEY

●
Indicates a restaurant featured in *5280* for the first time (though not necessarily a restaurant that has just opened).

★
Indicates inclusion in *5280*'s 2025 list of Denver's best restaurants. These selections are at the discretion of *5280* editors and are subject to change.

ABEJAS $$$$
Golden / Seasonal Enjoy seasonal new American plates at this community restaurant. The ever-changing menu features farm-fresh produce, sustainable fish, and organic meats, and the bar highlights small wineries and local brewers. Reservations accepted. *807 13th St., Golden, 303-952-9745. Dinner, Brunch*

★ **AFRICAN GRILL & BAR** $$
Lakewood / African Explore Africa at this warm and inviting restaurant run by the Osei-Fordwuo family. Peanut soups, fried fish, samosas, and jollof rice are just some of the deeply flavorful options that cover Ghana, South Africa, Kenya, and more. Reservations accepted. *955 S. Kipling Parkway, Lakewood, 303-985-4497. Lunch, Dinner*

★ **ALMA FONDA FINA** $$$$
LoHi / Mexican This Michelin-starred contemporary Mexican restaurant wows with its creative, shareable plates, which often feature house-made masa and flavor-packed salsas. The camote asado (roasted sweet potato) is an excellent way to start off your meal. Reservations accepted. *2556 15th St., 303-455-9463. Dinner*

ALTEÑO $$$$
Cherry Creek / Mexican This opulant destination from Michelin-starred chef Johnny Curiel of Alma Fonda Fina serves contemporary Mexican fare influenced by the chef's memories of the highlands of Jalisco. Sample seafood from the region's coastal waters and heartier dishes from higher elevations. Reservations accepted. *249 Clayton St., 303-532-4999. Dinner*

★ **ANNETTE** $$$
Aurora / American James Beard Award–winning chef Caroline Glover's Annette delivers a lineup of seasonal salads, pastas, wood-fired proteins, and other comforting bites in a modern, inviting space. Don't skip dessert, particularly if pecan pie is on the menu. Reservations accepted. *2501 Dallas St., Ste. 108, Aurora, 720-710-9975. Dinner*

BÁNH & BUTTER BAKERY CAFÉ $
Aurora / French Thoa Nguyen crafts French-style pastries inspired by her Vietnamese heritage. Go for the bánh mì on and dazzling crepe cakes. Reservations not accepted. *9935 E. Colfax Ave., Aurora, 720-513-9313. Breakfast, Lunch*

★ **BAROLO GRILL** $$$$
Cherry Creek / Italian Dedication to ingredients and tradition translates to the food and extensive, award-winning wine menu at this elegant eatery, which has focused on the cuisines of northern Italy's Tuscany and Piedmont regions since the 1990s. Reservations accepted. *3030 E. Sixth Ave., 303-393-1040. Dinner*

BASTIEN'S RESTAURANT $$$$
City Park / Steak House This swanky, mid-mod local favorite has been family-owned for more than 80 years. Come for the signature sugar-rubbed steaks. Reservations accepted. *3503 E. Colfax Ave., 303-322-0363. Dinner*

● **BEARLEEK** $$$
RiNo / Contemporary This sexy underground dining room offers a playful tour of worldly dishes spiked with seasonal ingredients and occasional gummy-bear-shaped delights, from compound butter with the dinner rolls to a frozen dessert on a popsicle stick. Reservations accepted. *2611 Walnut St., 303-524-2447. Dinner*

BECKON $$$$
RiNo / Contemporary Chef Duncan Holmes and Allison Anderson bring an elevated, intimate dining experience to Larimer Street. The Michelin-starred chef's tasting menu, fueled by the restaurant's own farm, changes with each season, and excellent, thoughtful wine pairings are available. Reservations accepted. *2843 Larimer St., 303-749-0020. Dinner*

★ **THE BINDERY** $$$
LoHi / Contemporary Linda Hampsten Fox's eatery, market, and bakery offers worldly fare inspired by her travels. Come early for croissants or settle in for the smoked rabbit pecan pie with mustard gelato for dinner. Reservations accepted. *1817 Central St., 303-993-2364. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Brunch*

★ **BLACKBELLY** $$$
Boulder / American Chef Hosea Rosenberg's carnivore-friendly menu focuses on charcuterie and daily butcher specials. Also check out the adjacent butcher shop and market, which peddles breakfast, lunch, and locally made retail goods, or the newer Blackbelly Butcher in Denver. Reservations accepted. *1606 Conestoga St., Boulder, 303-247-1000. Dinner*

BLACK CAT FARMSTEAD $$$$
Longmont / American Chef Eric Skokan reinvented his Boulder-based Black Cat Bistro by moving the entire operation to a farm 12 miles north of town. Diners enjoy foothills views in private cabanas that seat up to 12. Dinner is a set, multicourse meal based on seasonally available vegetables, grains, legumes, and farm-raised meats. Reservations required. *9889 N. 51st St., Longmont, 303-444-5500. Dinner*

BLUE PAN PIZZA $$
West Highland / Pizza Detroit-style pizza is the draw at this tiny spot. Try the Brooklyn Bridge, topped with pepperoni, Italian sausage, and ricotta and Romano cheeses. Also try the Congress Park location. Reservations not accepted. *3930 W. 32nd Ave., 720-456-7666. Lunch, Dinner*

BRASSERIE BRIXTON $$$$
Cole / French Pair the likes of steak frites, pâté with house-baked sourdough, and other comforting French specialties with a glass of wine (there's even some on tap) at this always-packed neighborhood bistro. But also be prepared for culinary creations that stray from the French canon. Reservations accepted. *3701 N. Williams St., 720-617-7911. Dinner*

BRUTØ $$$$
Downtown / International At the Wolf's Tailor's sister restaurant at the Dairy Block, executive chef Byron Gomez highlights heritage grains and house ferments in an omakase-style tasting menu. Tack on the cocktail pairing to make the experience even more special, then say yes to an extra order of piada bread to take home. Reservations accepted. *1801 Blake St., 720-325-2195. Dinner*

★ **CARNE** $$$$
RiNo / Steak House The newest restaurant from chef Dana Rodriguez grills up exquisite cuts of beef at a range of price points. Also explore its internationally inspired menu of shared plates—including green chile cheese potatoes—and composed entrées and order a customized martini from the roving cocktail cart. Reservations accepted. *2601 Larimer St., 303-953-1558. Dinner*

CARRERA'S TACOS $
Greenwood Village / Mexican Brothers Josh and Ryan Carrera sling West Coast–style tacos at this food-truck-turned-brick-and-mortar. Try the Cali burrito, stuffed with french fries and your choice of protein. Reservations not accepted. *7939 E. Arapahoe Road, Greenwood Village, 720-689-8035. Lunch, Dinner*

CART-DRIVER $$
RiNo / Pizza Inspired by Italy's roadside cafes, Cart-Driver slings oysters, wood-fired pizzas, and Prosecco on tap. The housemade focaccia with chicken liver mousse should not be missed. Also try the larger menu at the Highland location. Reservations not accepted. *2500 Larimer St., 303-292-3553. Dinner*

COPERTA $$$
Uptown / Italian Tuck into comforting Italian fare at this homey neighborhood restaurant, which celebrates the cuisine of Rome and southern Italy. Handmade pastas, creamy Burrata, and fiery pollo alla diavola are among the top choices. Reservations accepted. *400 E. 20th Ave., 720-749-4666. Dinner*

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★ DÂN DÃ $$
Aurora / Vietnamese Family recipes are on the menu at An and Thao Nguyen's cozy Vietnamese eatery dedicated to comfort food. Don't miss the dazzling spring roll towers, bun cha Ha Noi (the dish Anthony Bourdain and Barack Obama shared in Vietnam), and bubbling clay pots. Reservations accepted. *9945 E. Colfax Ave., Aurora, 720-476-7183. Lunch, Dinner*

DAUGHTER THAI KITCHEN & BAR $$$
LoHi / Thai This elegant, date-night-ready Thai restaurant from Ounjit Hardacre features favorites such as pad thai and massaman curry alongside a rotating lineup of rare-in-Denver specialties. Look for the whole-fish specials. Reservations accepted. *1700 Platte St., Ste. 140, 720-667-4652. Lunch, Dinner*

DOMO $$
Lincoln Park / Japanese After a number of temporary closures, this bucolic eatery is back to serving its homey Japanese fare in a relaxed atmosphere. Don't miss the curry, which has been a menu mainstay since Domo opened in 1996. Reservations not accepted. *1365 Osage St., 303-595-3666. Lunch, Dinner*

EDGEWATER PUBLIC MARKET $$
Edgewater / International Satisfy your cravings for everything from wild tacos to Ethiopian fare at this eclectic collective of nearly two dozen food stalls and boutiques. Tenants include Konjo Ethiopian, Tessa Deli, Saigon Noodle Club, and Wild Taco. Cocktails round out the dinner hour at Roger's Liquid Oasis. Reservations not accepted. *5505 W. 20th Ave., Edgewater, 720-749-2239. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

EL TACO DE MEXICO $
Lincoln Park / Mexican This Denver favorite and James Beard Foundation America's Classics winner has been serving Mexican food with an emphasis on traditional flavors since 1986. Reservations not accepted. *714 Santa Fe Drive, 303-623-3926. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*

FARMHOUSE THAI EATERY $$
Lakewood / Thai This cozy spot offers flavorful specialties from multiple regions, including papaya pok pok and khao kha moo. Reservations not accepted. *98 Wadsworth Blvd., Ste. 117, Lakewood, 303-237-2475. Lunch, Dinner*

FISH N BEER $$$
RiNo / Seafood Kevin Morrison offers approachable, fresh seafood and a hearty beer list at this casual oysterette. Try the ceviche or wood-fired whole bass. Reservations accepted. *3510 Larimer St., 303-248-3497. Dinner*

FLAGSTAFF HOUSE $$$$
Boulder / Contemporary On the side of Flagstaff Mountain, this eatery with its huge wine list and spectacular view of Boulder has been owned by the Monette family since 1971. Try the Hudson Valley foie gras. Reservations accepted. *1138 Flagstaff Road, Boulder, 303-442-4640. Dinner*

FRASCA FOOD AND WINE $$$$
Boulder / Italian The elegant fare at Frasca, an ode to the cuisine of Friuli-Venezia Giulia in Italy from owners Bobby Stuckey and chef Lachlan Mackinnon-Patterson, always wows. Reservations accepted. *1738 Pearl St., Boulder, 303-442-6966. Dinner*

GLADYS $
Edgewater / American Vegetable small plates feature at this concept at the Edgewater Public Market, where it began as a food counter before expanding to a full-sized restaurant. Don't miss the plant-based Reuben sandwich. Reservations not accepted. *5505 W. 20th Ave., Edgewater, 303-276-3309. Lunch, Dinner*

GUSTO $$$
West Colfax / Italian From chef Lon Symensma of ChoLon fame, this Italian eatery abutting Sloan's Lake plates up a playful variety of antipasti, pastas, and pizza. Make sure to start with an order of focaccia and end with olive oil cake. Reservations accepted. *671 Raleigh St., 303-284-0932. Lunch, Dinner*

★ HEY KIDDO $$$$
Berkeley / Contemporary From the team behind the Wolf's Tailor and Brutø, this globally inspired restaurant presents fine-dining fare focused on sustainable and local ingredients in relaxed environs. Try the wagyu beef galbi with chef's rice that's shaken tableside. Reservations accepted. *4337 Tennyson St., Ste. 300, 720-778-2977. Dinner*

HOP ALLEY $$$$
RiNo / Chinese From Tommy Lee of Uncle, this neighborhood hangout's daily menu is composed of dishes rooted in Chinese tradition with a distinctive flair. If spots are open at the luxurious chef's counter, though, don't miss the exclusive experience. Reservations accepted. *3500 Larimer St., 720-379-8340. Dinner*

IZAKAYA DEN $$$
Platt Park / Japanese This sibling to Sushi Den next door focuses on traditional small plates that pair well with Japanese beer, whisky, and sake. But the ultra-fresh nigiri and sashimi are worth a try too. Reservations accepted. *1487-A S. Pearl St., 303-777-0691. Lunch, Dinner*

JOVANINA'S BROKEN ITALIAN $$$
LoDo / Italian This gorgeous LoDo eatery expands on traditional Italian fare with a penchant for unexpected, seasonal ingredients. Handmade pastas and wood-fired focaccia and pizzas provide an additional draw, as does a well-stocked amari cart. Reservations accepted. *1520 Blake St., 720-541-7721. Dinner*

★ KAWA NI $$$
LoHi / Asian Connecticut transplant Bill Taibe helms this upscale izakaya concept in LoHi. Peruse the eclectic menu of noodles, sushi, and small plates, and don't miss the shaved broccoli miso goma. Reservations accepted. *1900 W. 32nd Ave., 303-455-9208. Dinner*

KIKÉ'S RED TACOS $
LoHi / Mexican This brick-and-mortar location of a popular Mexican food truck is known for its quesabirria tacos, which come stuffed with cheese and your choice of meat and a side of rich, spicy consomé for dunking. Reservations not accepted. *1200 W. 38th Ave., 720-397-0591. Lunch, Dinner*

LA DIABLA POZOLE Y MEZCAL $$
Ballpark / Mexican This lively eatery from chef Jose Avila earned a Michelin Bib Gourmand rating for its comforting pozole and other affordably priced Mexican fare. Don't miss the daily pastor selections served from the spinning trompo outside or whole-animal barbacoa on the weekends. Reservations not accepted. *2233 Larimer St., 720-519-1060. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Brunch*

LA FILLETTE BAKERY $$
Montclair / French This French-inspired bakery makes magical laminated creations, including a brunch burger on a split croissant. A stop for a quick meal always results in a boxful of pastries for later. Reservations not accepted. *6217 E. 14th Ave., 303-355-0022. Breakfast, Lunch, Brunch*

★ LUCHADOR TACO & MORE $$
Whittier / Mexican Chef Zuri Resendiz's vibrant takes on Mexican street food are refined and full of flavor at this neighborhood joint dedicated to Mexican wrestlers. Don't miss the Peruvian-inspired plates, either, such as the lomo saltado or causa tartare. Reservations accepted. *2030 E. 28th Ave., 303-954-0672. Dinner*

LUCINA EATERY & BAR $$$
South Park Hill / Latin American Bold flavors from Latin America, the Caribbean, and coastal Spain tantalize at this lively restaurant. Try the Argentinian-style empanadas, Puerto Rican mofongo (plantain mash), or the two-person paella with rotating toppings served only on Fridays and Saturdays. Reservations accepted. *2245 Kearney St., Ste. 101, 720-814-1053. Dinner*

★ MAGNA KAINAN $$$
Cole / Filipino Chef-restaurateur Carlo Lamagna of Portland, Oregon, brings a deep dive into Filipino cuisine to Denver with this fun and lively eatery. Start with skewers, but don't miss the crab fat noodles. Reservations accepted. *1350 40th St., 720-524-8684. Dinner, Brunch*

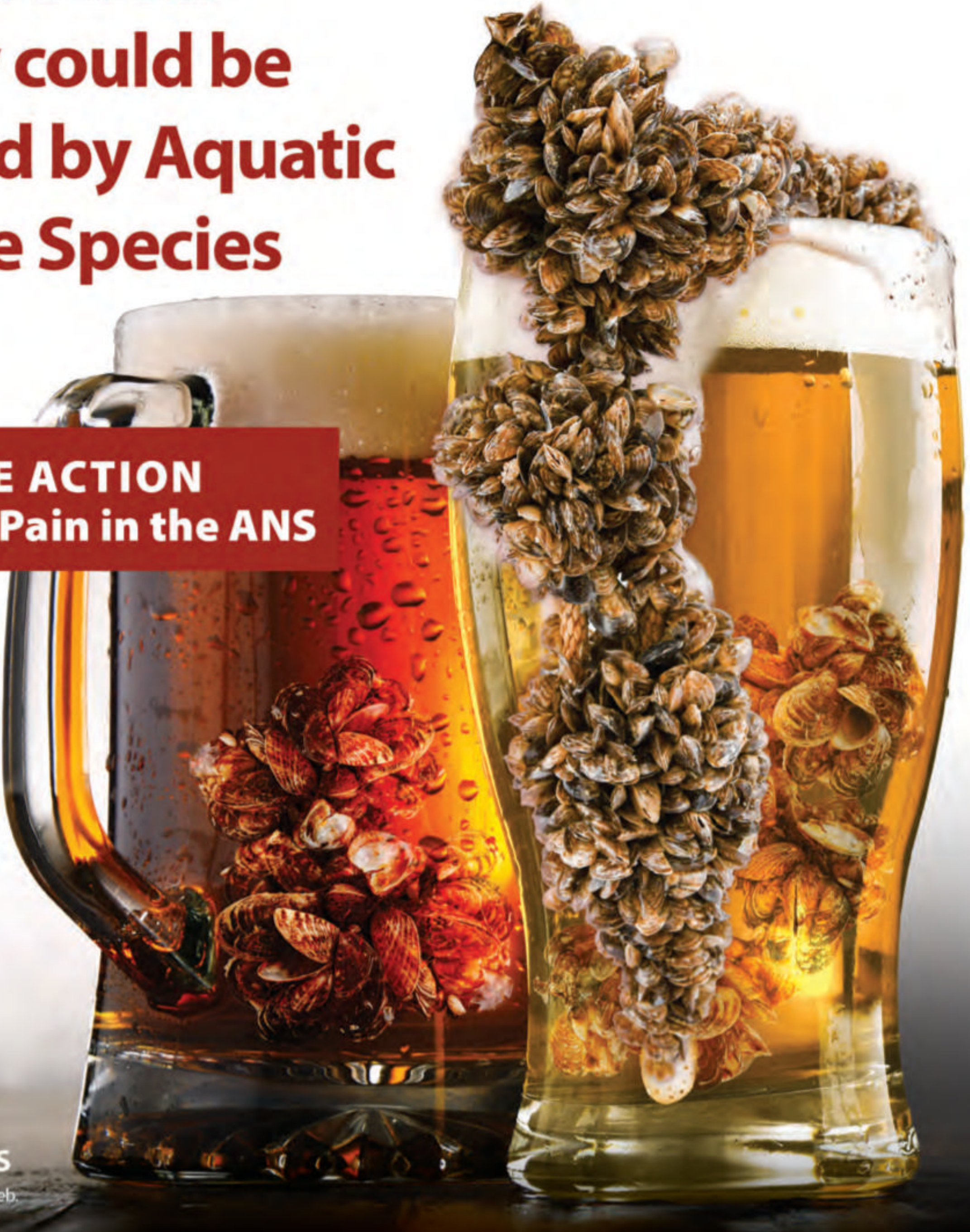
★ MAJOR TOM $$$$
RiNo / American This lounge from the team behind Beckon offers a Champagne-centric drinks menu and a delectable lineup of shareable bites. Enjoy larger-format plates at a table inside, or throw back some oysters on the beautiful patio. Reservations accepted. *2845 Larimer St., 303-848-9777. Dinner, Brunch*

★ MAKFAM $$
Baker / Chinese The Chinese cuisine, inspired by family recipes, at this fast-casual eatery blends tradition with a whole lot of fun. Try fancy wun tun tong dumplings, the sizzling spicy noodles, or Mama Wan's pork belly, with 24-hour braised pork served over rice. Don't miss midday specials starting at 2 p.m. Reservations not accepted. *39 W. First Ave., 720-982-5011. Lunch, Dinner*

★ MAMA JO'S BISCUITS & BBQ $$
City Park / Southern Ben and Jodi Polson are cooking up great fried chicken, smoked meats, country-style biscuits, and other down-home treats in the former home of Steve's Snappin' Dogs. Finish up with a fried banana pudding hand pie. Reservations not accepted. *3525 E. Colfax Ave., 303-333-7627. Lunch, Dinner*

Oh, SHELL NO

Colorado's beer industry could be impacted by Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS)



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MARIGOLD $$$$
Lyons / European This intimate, light-filled restaurant serves seasonally driven fare. The pink-peppercorn-laced farinata (chickpea pancake) is a delicious mainstay of the frequently changing menu; the amaro-centric cocktail program is also delightful. Reservations accepted. *405 Main St., Ste. B, Lyons, 303-823-2333. Dinner*

★ **MOLOTOV KITSCHEN & COCKTAILS** $$$$
City Park / Eastern European The concise and clever menu at this aptly kitschy restaurant celebrates the cuisine of Ukraine, with shoutouts to other Slavic traditions. Try house-baked breads, creative takes on borscht, and ever-changing varenyky. Toast with house-infused horilka. Reservations accepted. *3333 E. Colfax Ave., 303-316-3333. Dinner*

ODIE B'S $
Sunnyside / American Sandwiches reach their prime at this fast-casual joint. Try twists on classics like the fried chicken sandwich with deviled egg spread or the chopped cheese with breakfast sausage. Also try the Cole location. Reservations not accepted. *2651 W. 38th Ave., 303-993-8078. Breakfast, Lunch, Brunch*

★ **OSTERIA ALBERICO** $$
Englewood / Italian The latest from the Frasca Hospitality Group serves up osteria-style Italian cuisine: rustic, straightforward, and comforting, but with the same attention to hospitality we've come to expect from Tavernetta, Sunday Vinyl, and Frasca Food and Wine. Reservations accepted. *3455 S. University Blvd., Englewood, 303-970-8840. Dinner*

★ **RESTAURANT OLIVIA** $$$$
Washington Park / Italian This cozy yet modern neighborhood spot specializes in fresh pastas of all varieties. The ravioli and other stuffed pastas are must-orders, and a specialty Negroni doesn't hurt either. Opt for the tasting menu if you can't decide. Reservations accepted. *290 S. Downing St., 303-999-0395. Dinner*

● **RIOT BBQ** $$
Overland / Barbecue Chef Manny Barella and pitmaster Patrick Klaiber team up to offer Texas-style barbecue—brisket, pork shoulder, spare ribs, and house-made sausage—with Mexican flavors. Don't miss the pollo loco and esquites cornbread. Reservations not accepted. *2180 S. Delaware St., 303-872-6862. Lunch, Dinner*

★ **SAP SUA** $$$
Congress Park / Vietnamese This smart eatery from chef-owners Ni and Anna Nguyen finds its culinary footing in Vietnamese flavors. Herbaceous offerings like culantro-capped tomato toast and lemongrass pork shoulder are favorites of the menu. Reservations accepted. *2550 E. Colfax Ave., 303-736-2303. Dinner*

★ **SOMEBODY PEOPLE** $$
Platt Park / Mediterranean At this plant-based restaurant (where even leather upholstry is made from pineapple), Sam and Tricia Maher and executive chef Justin Freeman finesse seasonal ingredients into hearty, Mediterranean-influenced fare. Visit during Sunday Supper for an affordable, multicourse experience. Reservations accepted. *1165 S. Broadway, 720-502-5681. Dinner*

★ **SPUNTINO** $$$
Highland / Italian Enjoy the locally sourced menu at this Italian-inspired, husband-and-wife-owned spot. Go for any of the dishes with South Indian influences—informed by chef Cindhura Reddy's heritage—like cavatelli with chicken korma. Reservations accepted. *2639 W. 32nd Ave., 303-433-0949. Dinner*

★ **SUSHI DEN** $$$$
Platt Park / Japanese Sushi Den offers fresh, vibrant seafood flown in from Japan daily and a hip, lively scene. Sit at the bar and watch the sushi chefs as they work their artistry. For something different, order the lobster ramen. Reservations accepted. *1487 S. Pearl St., 303-777-0826. Lunch, Dinner*

TOCABE, AN AMERICAN INDIAN EATERY $
Berkeley / American Feast on Indigenous fare such as grain-based posu bowls, braised bison, and fry bread tacos made with ingredients sourced from Native producers at this fast-casual spot. Also try the new DIA location. Reservations not accepted. *3536 W. 44th Ave., 720-524-8282. Lunch, Dinner*

★ **TOFU STORY** $$
Aurora / Korean House-made tofu is the draw at this Korean eatery from chef-restaurateur JW Lee. Order the spicy seafood tofu stew with pressure-cooked rice presented tableside. Marinated crab is a hard-to-find house specialty. Reservations not accepted. *2060 S. Havana St., Aurora, 303-954-9372. Lunch, Dinner*

WORK & CLASS $$$
RiNo / American This elevated meat-and-three concept from chef Dana Rodriguez offers a delicious hybrid of American and Latin cuisine in raucous, repurposed-shipping-container digs. Our picks: the rotisserie chicken, chickpea croquettes, and the roasted Colorado lamb. Also visit the new Englewood location. Reservations not accepted. *2500 Larimer St., 303-292-0700. Dinner*

★ **XIQUITA** $$$
Uptown / Mexican Chef Erasmo Casiano serves soulful fare inspired by the diverse culinary landscape of Mexico. Don't miss the masa dishes made using the traditional nixtamal process—tacos, of course, but also tamales, sopes, and molotes—and witty takes on classic cocktails. A well-priced happy hour offers exclusive bites. Reservations accepted. *500 E. 19th Ave., 720-287-2701. Dinner*

★ **YUAN WONTON** $$
North Park Hill / Asian House-made dumplings earn top billing at this ambitious eatery from James Beard Award–nominated chef Penelope Wong. Head in on Fridays for a dim-sum-themed lunch that showcases the best of Wong's hand-folded delicacies. Takeout dinners are offered on Thursdays and Fridays. Reservations accepted. *2878 Fairfax St., 303-320-5642. Lunch*

▶ These listings are in no way related to advertising in *5280*. If you find that a restaurant differs significantly from the information in its listing or your favorite restaurant is missing from the Dining Guide, please let us know. Write us at 5280 Elevated, Inc., 1675 Larimer St., Suite 675, Denver, CO 80202 or dining@5280.com.

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mask the reality of the darkness that he was talking about," Pope says. "Thinking about the moments that inspired that song, which he's talked about at length too—the moments of having detoxed from alcohol were so bad that those things were happening to him."

At the Bluebird that night in April 2013, Pope felt Rateliff reveal himself. "When I saw him dancing onstage, this thing that was within him finally was unleashed," Pope recalls. "To see him dance that way, and to hear him open his voice—it felt like these were the most authentic and natural parts of him that I'd ever seen him share."

NATHANIEL RATELIFF & the Night Sweats were soon in demand across Denver. They headlined the Boulder Theater, then an unofficial show in Meese's backyard during the Underground Music Showcase. To accommodate the eight band members for the latter, Rateliff built a new deck for Meese on top of cinder blocks. The platform was still too small for the three horn players, so Meese stationed them on the roof.

Meanwhile, a demo Rateliff had recorded on a Radio Shack cassette player made its way to Matt Marshall, then senior vice president of A&R at Nashville-based Concord Music Group. Marshall knew and admired Rateliff from his Born in the Flood days, although he wasn't sure his bosses would sign him. (In the record business, an artist getting dropped by a well-known label like Rounder carries the whiff of future failure.) Marshall prevailed by positioning Nathaniel Rateliff & the Night Sweats as part of an upswing in a new type of rootsy folk and rock music, along with the Alabama Shakes and St. Paul and the Broken Bones. It was Rateliff's idea for Concord-owned Stax Records—the storied home of Sam & Dave, Otis Redding, and other Memphis soul giants—to release the album. His next decision: finding a producer who could make the record on a tiny budget.

One night in 2014, around 10:30, the answer arrived in the form of a call from Richard Swift. Swift was an eccentric, comedic presence who, according to the Black Keys' frontman Dan Auerbach, once rambled for 30 minutes in the voice of a teenage girl while they were in the studio. He was also a gifted collaborator. *Rolling Stone* would later call him "one of rock's most valuable sidemen and producers."

Swift had heard the Night Sweats' demos, and as he and Rateliff spoke that night, they realized they shared a philosophy. "How'd you record these songs?" Swift asked.

"One mic and just moving around the room," Rateliff replied.

"That's pretty much what I do," Swift said.

At first, Rateliff traveled alone to Swift's studio in a converted barn in Cottage Grove, Oregon, south of Eugene. The way Swift worked was to record whatever musical ideas Rateliff had in mind, then stay up all night by himself, adding instruments and remixes. "He always chose vibe over perfection," Rateliff says. While they figured out how to turn the Night Sweats' demos into professional recordings, they realized they had something else in common: drinking.

The pair lunched daily at a local Mexican restaurant, a routine that turned into "a bottle of liquor and burning through full liters and

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fifths—and in between that, trying to be like, 'Drink a gallon of water,'" Rateliff says. "It was this battle: I'm going to be moving in extremes and be sober and exercise like crazy, and then eating chicken tenders and nachos and getting hammered. The pendulum was swinging pretty hard."

Rateliff, whose first musical instrument was the drums, provided initial percussion for the tracks. He and Swift later summoned Meese from Denver to layer his drums on top of Rateliff's, giving the songs a booming rhythmic feel. "It was definitely fueled by our drinking habits at the time, which reflects itself in how emotive his vocals are," Meese says. "You pour that much booze on the fire, you're going to get a big flame, but that flame's going to die out relatively quick, so you've got to figure out how to get it roaring again."

The trio created enough music for a United Kingdom–only EP containing four songs, including "S.O.B.," which Stax released on June 29, 2015, to coincide with an upcoming European tour. At first, the audiences there appeared unmoved by Rateliff's new sound. They'd bought tickets for a singer-songwriter and got a completely different show. Then, when the band was in Berlin, the label launched the "S.O.B." single. Not long after, Rateliff recalls, "I got a call from my manager to tell us we were doing Fallon."

The band arrived in New York City for *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* on August 5, 16 days before the full album was scheduled to come out. The host couldn't contain his excitement. Fallon had come across Rateliff on YouTube and had personally asked his music booker to find the band; he kept interrupting his guests to hold up the cover, saying, "You gotta check this out," according to *Rolling Stone*. Nevertheless, Pope says the Night Sweats were more determined than nervous. "We knew, *This is our chance*," Pope says. "We were going to give it everything we had." They didn't disappoint. The band's performance of "S.O.B." was so boisterous that Fallon raved "Soulful! Soulful!" to the TV audience afterward. Ice Cube, one of Fallon's guests that night, told Pope: "I got a kick out of that." Meese describes it as "a biopic moment." According to *Billboard*, Paul McCartney called Fallon soon after: "That guy the other night—son of a bitch. They set the place on fire."

Believing FM stations wouldn't play a song with "son of a bitch" in the lyrics, Stax broke "S.O.B." through just a few plays on SiriusXM satellite radio's Spectrum channel. It took off, preselling 1,200 copies of the album in a single week. After Fallon, Marshall says, the presale for the debut album jumped from 1,200 to 12,000 units within a week. Then radio overcame whatever misgivings it may have had, and "S.O.B." topped *Billboard*'s Alternative Airplay chart for four straight weeks after its release. "It sounded special and really welcoming," says Bret Saunders, a longtime host on Denver's KBCO, which added the band to its regular rotation. "There was a warmth and presence in this music I hadn't heard before, not just with him, but with any band."

SUDDENLY, RATELIFF WAS A STAR. As of today, the Night Sweats' debut album has sold nearly 750,000 copies worldwide, and its songs have racked up more than 1.1 billion streams. The band headlined Red Rocks that September and went on to do so 16 more times—23 if you count the smaller, socially distanced shows it played during the pandemic. The Night Sweats have put out three more albums on Stax, and Rateliff added a solo album of his own, *And It's Still Alright*, in 2020.

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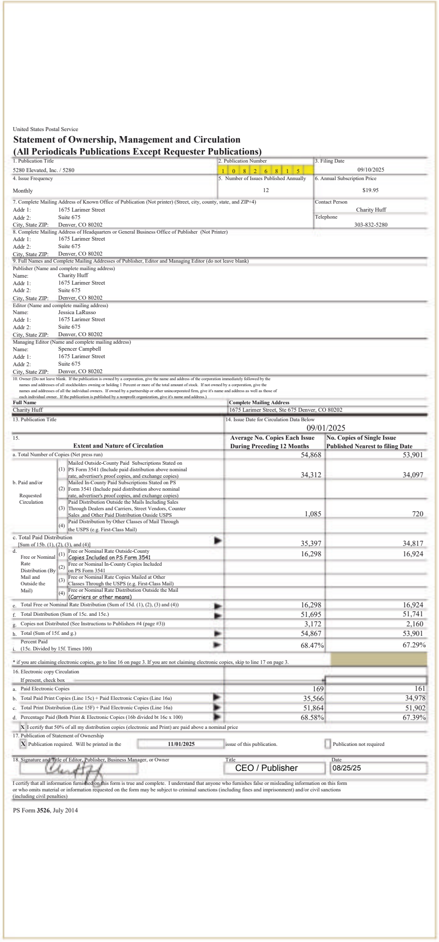

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Addr 1: 1675 Larimer Street
Addr 2: Suite 675
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Editor (Name and complete mailing address)
Name: Jessica LaRusso
Addr 1: 1675 Larimer Street
Addr 2: Suite 675
City, State ZIP: Denver, CO 80202

Managing Editor (Name and complete mailing address)
Name: Spencer Campbell
Addr 1: 1675 Larimer Street
Addr 2: Suite 675
City, State ZIP: Denver, CO 80202

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Rateliff continues to live in Colorado—after years of bunking in friends' apartments, he moved into a house outside of Denver—and has used his influence to support local venues. He and Bob Ashby, a friend from Missouri, bought the Skylark Lounge on South Broadway in 2021, and Rateliff headlined a performance with the Colorado Symphony Orchestra, covering songs from one of his favorite albums, Harry Nilsson's 1973 *A Little Touch of Schmilsson in the Night*, in 2023. Colorado's music scene had threatened to break through for decades—from Poco in the '70s to Big Head Todd and the Monsters and the Samples in the '90s to the Fray in the '00s—but during the 2010s, Saunders says, the Night Sweats and the Lumineers "made this town almost like a Nashville."

For Rateliff, though, professional success coincided with one of the lowest points in his personal life. "I was really struggling with alcoholism," Rateliff recalls, "but I couldn't see that yet." Fortunately, he got the time and means to reach that clarity. Swift wasn't so lucky. The band's beloved collaborator—who had always kept friends laughing with his impressions, riffing, and rapping—died at the age of 41, a year after producing the band's follow-up album, 2018's *Tearing at the Seams*. After years of alcohol misuse, he'd developed hepatitis. His liver and kidneys simply stopped working.

For Rateliff, the road to sobriety lasted years. In 2023, he took six months off to try and get clean; the next year, he had to figure out how to be a musician without booze. He never participated in the Twelve Steps but went through a long therapy process. He says he hasn't had a drink since January 1, 2025. In his rambling, self-analytical style, Rateliff says his sobriety is a work in progress—something he's been dealing with throughout his adult life. "It's been progressively a thing I've worked on every year, trying to recognize my relationship with alcohol and substance and food and all the things that you do as an emotional person," he says.

Looking back at the success of Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats, the singer is less guarded and more enthusiastic. "I felt like I'd worked 20-odd years to get to that moment, and then the work really started," Rateliff says. "I was on the road 290 days a year or more. It was beautiful and hard and, at times, messy. But it certainly changed my life." ▲

Steve Knopper is a Denver-based writer and a *Billboard* editor-at-large. He first interviewed Rateliff in 2006, after a Born in the Flood set at South by Southwest in Austin. Send feedback to letters@5280.com.

5280 SCENE CALENDAR

NOV 8

Free Night at the Museums

Throughout Denver
5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Ready for a night worth a thousand stories? On Saturday, November 8, 20 of Denver's best museums will stay open late from 5–10 p.m. with free admission and free shuttles running all night long.

Information and tickets at denverartsweek.com.

UNION STATION
TRAVEL BY TRAIN
NOV 14

World Diabetes Day with the Children's Diabetes Foundation

Denver Union Station • 11:00 a.m.

Celebrate Diabetes Awareness Month this November! Join us on World Diabetes Day, November 14, for a brief program and free on-site ASK Screening for type 1 diabetes and celiac disease. Wear blue to support this year's theme: Diabaddies & Diabuddies.

Information and tickets at childrensdiabetesfoundation.org/events.

NOV 15

Chili, Booze, & Brews

The Arch, Denver
6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

A can't-miss food-and-beverage competition featuring Colorado craft breweries, small-batch distilleries, home-grown hot sauce companies, and chefs from local Denver restaurants. Plus, a performance from Colorado's own Hazel Miller! All to bring the heat and the hope for kids with cancer!

Information and tickets at chiliboozeandbrews.com.

TURKEY TROT 2024
20
NOV 27

52nd Annual Mile High United Way Turkey Trot

Washington Park, Denver • 9:00 a.m.

Join Mile High United Way for Denver's greatest Thanksgiving tradition! This 4-mile race directly helps kids begin school ready to succeed, connects young adults to education and workforce development, and ensures families can meet their basic needs.

Information and tickets at unitedwaydenver.org/turkeytrot.

DEC 6

9NEWS Parade of Lights

Downtown Denver • 6:00 p.m.

The 9NEWS Parade of Lights, proudly produced by the Downtown Denver Partnership, will return on December 6, 2025! This beloved holiday tradition will once again light up Downtown Denver with more than 40 dazzling floats, giant balloons, marching bands, equestrian units, cultural displays, and special guest appearances from Major Waddles the penguin and Santa himself.

Information and tickets at winterindenver.com/parade.

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National Western Stock Show

National Western Complex, Denver
January 10-25, 2026

The West isn't just a place, it's a feeling. This January, the National Western Stock Show, presented by CommonSpirit Health, brings the heart of the West to Denver. Saddle up for 16 days of rodeo action, family fun, and championship livestock.

Information and tickets at nationalwestern.com.

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2025 DENVER

WEALTH MANAGERS — INVESTMENT PROFESSIONALS

These days, it takes a village to manage your financial world. Whether it is managing your assets with a wealth manager, or picking the right life insurance, finding the right team can be a daunting task. In fact, many consumers have a hard time figuring out where to even begin.

Sometimes, a few simple questions can put you off on the right path. Asking a professional what makes working with them a unique experience can help you understand how they work and if their style meshes with your own.

This is a great place to start! Five Star Professional uses its own proprietary research methodology to name outstanding professionals, then works with publications such as *5280: The Denver Magazine* to spread the word about award winners. Each award candidate undergoes a thorough research process (detailed here) before being considered for the final list of award winners. For the complete list of winners, go to www.fivestarprofessional.com.

RESEARCH DISCLOSURES

In order to consider a broad population of high-quality wealth managers and investment professionals, award candidates are identified by one of three sources: firm nomination, peer nomination or prequalification based on industry standing. Self-nominations are not accepted. Denver-area award candidates were identified using internal and external research data. Candidates do not pay a fee to be considered or placed on the final lists of Five Star Wealth Managers or Five Star Investment Professionals.

- The Five Star award is not indicative of a professional's future performance.
- Wealth managers may or may not use discretion in their practice and therefore may not manage their clients' assets.
- The inclusion of a professional on the Five Star Wealth Manager list or the Five Star Investment Professional list should not be construed as an endorsement of the professional by Five Star Professional or *5280: The Denver Magazine.*
- Working with a Five Star Wealth Manager, Five Star Investment Professional or any professional is no guarantee as to future investment success, nor is there any guarantee that the selected professionals will be awarded this accomplishment by Five Star Professional in the future.
- Five Star Professional is not an advisory firm and the content of this article should not be considered financial advice. For more information on the Five Star Wealth Manager or Five Star Investment Professional award programs, research and selection criteria, go to www.fivestarprofessional.com/public/research.

FIVE STAR WEALTH MANAGER

DETERMINATION OF AWARD WINNERS CRITERIA

Award candidates who satisfied 10 objective eligibility and evaluation criteria were named 2025 Five Star Wealth Managers. **Eligibility Criteria – Required:** 1. Credentialed as a registered investment adviser or a registered investment adviser representative. 2. Actively employed as a credentialed professional in the financial services industry for a minimum of five years. 3. Favorable regulatory and complaint history review. 4. Fulfilled their firm review based on internal firm standards. 5. Accepting new clients. **Evaluation Criteria – Considered:** 6. One-year client retention rate. 7. Five-year client retention rate. 8. Non-institutional discretionary and/or non-discretionary client assets administered. 9. Number of client households served. 10. Education and professional designations. 2,858 award candidates in the Denver area were considered for the Five Star Wealth Manager award. 217 (approximately 8% of the award candidates) were named 2025 Five Star Wealth Managers.

FIVE STAR INVESTMENT PROFESSIONAL

DETERMINATION OF AWARD WINNERS CRITERIA

The investment professional award goes to estate planning attorneys, insurance agents and select others in the financial industry. **Eligibility Criteria – Required:** 1. Credentialed with appropriate state or industry licensures. 2. Actively employed as a credentialed professional in the financial services industry for a minimum of five years. 3. Favorable regulatory and complaint history review. 4. Accepting new clients. **Evaluation Criteria – Considered:** 5. One-year client retention rate. 6. Five-year client retention rate. 7. Number of client households served. 8. Recent personal production and performance (industry specific criteria). 9. Education and professional designations/industry and board certifications. 10. Pro Bono and community service work. This year, we honored 11 Denver-area investment professionals with the Five Star Investment Professional award.

This award was issued on 10/01/2025 by Five Star Professional (FSP) for the time period 01/01/2025 through 06/02/2025. Fee paid for use of marketing materials. Self-completed
considered for the award; 217 (8% of candidates) were named 2025 Five Star Wealth Managers. The following prior year statistics use this format: YEAR: # Considered, # Winners, % of
1/17/22 - 7/15/22; 2021: 2,158, 206, 10%, 10/1/21, 1/4/21 - 7/30/21; 2020: 2,172, 213, 10%, 10/1/20, 1/20/20 - 8/14/20; 2019: 2,146, 262, 12%, 10/1/19, 1/21/19 - 8/23/19; 2018:
2/19/15 - 8/17/15; 2014: 4,385, 528, 12%, 10/1/14, 2/19/13 - 8/17/13; 2013: 2,083, 607, 29%, 10/1/13, 2/19/12 - 8/17/12; 2012: 1,965, 611, 31%, 10/1/12, 2/19/11 - 8/17/11.

Wealth managers do not pay a fee to be considered or placed on the final list of Five Star Wealth Managers. The award is based on 10 objective criteria. Eligibility criteria – required: 1. Credentialed as a registered investment adviser (RIA) or a registered investment
regulatory action that resulted in a license being suspended or revoked, or payment of a fine; B. Had more than a total of three settled or pending complaints filed against them and/or a total of five settled, pending, dismissed or denied complaints with any
not be representative of any one client's experience; C. Individually contributed to a financial settlement of a customer complaint; D. Filed for personal bankruptcy within the past 11 years; E. Been terminated from a financial services firm within the past 11 years;
discretionary client assets administered; 9. Number of client households served; 10. Education and professional designations. FSP does not evaluate quality of services provided to clients. The award is not indicative of the wealth manager's future performance.
FSP or this publication. Working with a Five Star Wealth Manager or any wealth manager is no guarantee as to future investment success, nor is there any guarantee that the selected wealth managers will be awarded this accomplishment by FSP in the future.

FIVE STAR AWARD WINNERS

WEALTH MANAGERS — INVESTMENT PROFESSIONALS

All award winners are listed in this publication.

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Wedbush Securities Inc. *Page 12*

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Shelley Schlossberg
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Kris Tower
American Portfolios Denver

Scott Tremlett
Paramount Associates Wealth Management

Steven Vrooman
Senior and Family Financial, LLC

T.H. Williams
Wells Fargo Advisors *Page 4*

Tom Wolf
Oppenheimer & Co. Inc.

Investment Professional

Certified Public Accountant

Greg Zick
Zick Business Advisors, Inc.

Continued on FS-12

FIVE STAR PROFESSIONAL

PROPRIETARY RESEARCH PROCESS

NOMINATION OF CANDIDATES

Three sources of nominations:
- Firm nominations
- Peer nominations
- Prequalification based on industry credentials

REGULATORY CONSUMER COMPLAINT REVIEW

All candidates must demonstrate a favorable regulatory history.

CANDIDATE SUBMISSION OF PRACTICE INFORMATION

Candidates must complete either an online or over-the-phone interview.

EVALUATION OF CANDIDATE PRACTICE

Candidates are evaluated on 10 objective evaluation and eligibility criteria.

FIRM REVIEW OF AWARD CANDIDATE LIST

All candidates are reviewed by a representative of their firm before final selection.

2025 AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Finalization and announcement of Five Star Professional award winners.

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Visit www.fivestarprofessional.com. This year, we honored 11 Denver-area investment professionals with the Five Star Investment Professional award.

FIVE STAR
WEALTH MANAGER
BRUCE G. ALLEN INVESTMENTS, LLC

Bruce G. Allen

AIFA®, CIMA®, CPWA®, General Securities Principal

Fourteen-Year Winner

3200 E Cherry Creek South Drive, Suite 640 • Denver, CO 80209
Office: 303-592-5535 • Fax: 303-592-5534
bruce@bgaillc.com • www.brucegalleninvestments.com

I created Bruce G. Allen Investments, LLC to help our clients build, manage, protect and transition their wealth. We take a comprehensive approach to wealth management by touching on the four cornerstones of investments, credit and liability management, risk management and estate and trust matters.

Advisory services offered through Bruce G. Allen Investments, LLC., a Registered Investment Advisor. Securities offered through M. S. Howells & Co., member FINRA/SIPC. M. S. Howells & Co. and Bruce G. Allen Investments, LLC are not affiliated. Availability of services is subject to applicable licensing requirements.

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VIRTUENT
WEALTH MANAGEMENT GROUP
OF WELLS FARGO ADVISORS

Virtuent Wealth Management Group of Wells Fargo Advisors

Left to right: Vicki Hansen, Senior Registered Client Associate; Sandra McClaury, Client Associate; 2020 – 2025 winner Meghan McGuire, CFP®, MS, ChFC®, RICP®, Senior Vice President – Investments; 2012, 2014 – 2017 and 2022 winner Steve Zahorik, MBA, CRPC®, Senior Vice President – Investments; 2013 – 2025 winner T.H. Williams, PhD, CFP®, Private Wealth Financial Advisor, Managing Director – Investments; 2019 and 2023 – 2025 winner Mick Pepper, Managing Director – Investments; Scott Shuler, Client Performance Analyst – Vice President; Donna Boyette, Senior Registered Client Associate; Susie Kaufman, Senior Registered Client Associate

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Phone: 844-925-0888 • th.williams@wfadvisors.com
www.virtuentwmg.com

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Investment and Insurance Products: Not FDIC Insured / No Bank Guarantee / May Lose Value

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FIVE STAR
WEALTH MANAGER

COPPER PASS
ADVISORY

Ian MacClure

Founder, Wealth Advisor

2025 Winner

Copper Pass Advisory

9200 E Mineral Avenue, Suite 100 • Centennial, CO 80112
Phone: 303-827-0944 • ian@cpadvisory.com
www.cpadvisory.com

As a dedicated and passionate Financial Advisor at Copper Pass Advisory, I help my clients navigate the exciting financial journey ahead with confidence and clarity.

At Copper Pass Advisory, we're not just another financial services group. We're a close-knit community of driven individuals committed to helping each other thrive. Our comprehensive suite of services covers everything from investment portfolio management to retirement planning, philanthropic opportunities, risk management, and much more.

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Amy King

CFP®, Owner and Senior Advisor

Woman-Owned, Judgment-Free and Focused on Your Financial Goals

- **Female friendly and women-owned**
- **Complimentary Hour of Power meeting**
- **Financial Planning that is personal, approachable and fun**

Money is personal and sometimes overwhelming. At 29:11 Financial Planning, we help women and those who support them feel less anxious and more confident about their financial future. Based in Colorado, our woman-owned firm offers judgment-free, faith-driven advice with no sales pressure, just practical guidance for budgeting, investing, retirement and life transitions like divorce or caregiving. Our complimentary Hour of Power sessions provide straight answers, free from jargon. We make financial planning personal, approachable and even a little fun.

29 11
Financial Planning
3
YEAR
WINNER

Left to right: Amanda Arrick; Three-year winner Amy King, CFP®, Owner and Senior Advisor

29 11 Financial Planning

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FIVE STAR WEALTH MANAGER AWARD WINNER

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Adam J. Moeller

President

4
YEAR
WINNER

Four-year winner Adam J. Moeller

Where Clients Come To Win at Retirement

Adam was born and raised in Denver, Colorado. His mom was a teacher in Cherry Creek schools, and his dad was a Lutheran minister. He is married to his beautiful wife, Jennifer, a prominent attorney. They have three children: Jackson, Jordan and Sophia. After college and getting a degree in finance, his basketball talents allowed him to play professionally. His competitive nature and desire to do the best thing possible for all clients is why he started his independent fiduciary firm. When Adam is not meeting with clients, he is coaching, fishing or golfing. Adam will show you that there is a better, smarter, cheaper, safer and more efficient way of doing things. He prides himself on educating his clients on the why, what, when and how of planning for retirement. Adam has been published in many new outlets including *Forbes*, *Fortune*, and *The Wall Street Journal*.

- **"Mile High Money Radio Show", tune in every weekend on KOA 94.1 and 104.3 the Fan, past shows at myajmfinancial.com**
- **Independent fiduciary with over 20 years of success**
- **Wealth management, asset protection, income planning, long-term care alternatives, estate planning, tax planning**

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FIVE STAR WEALTH MANAGER AWARD WINNER

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GPS Financial Planning

14
YEAR
WINNER

Left to right: 2021 – 2025 winner Tyler Bernard; Heather Arlen; 2012 – 2025 winner Mark D. Arlen, MBA, CFP®, Founder, Principal Advisor; Cathy Nowalk; Aaron Huntoon; Chandler Arlen

Goals — Plans — Solutions

- **Our ultimate goal is to help you live your "Happily Ever After" by helping you attain what we believe is the highest form of wealth: the ability to do what you want, when you want, with who you want, for as long as you want.**

GPS FINANCIAL PLANNING
GOALS • PLANS • SOLUTIONS

We have been helping clients since 1983.

Why clients choose GPS Financial Planning:

1) *Fiduciary standard:* We always act in your best interest — with transparency and trust at the forefront.

2) *Helicopter view:* We evaluate your entire financial landscape in one cohesive view — revealing coordination gaps and uncovering planning opportunities that may shape your financial future.

3) *Catalysts for action:* We act as a catalyst to get things done.

4) *Complete coordination:* We collaborate with your attorney, CPA and other professionals to ensure your plan is fully aligned.

5) Discover the difference between simply getting the work done and having it done as well as possible.

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FIVE STAR WEALTH MANAGER AWARD WINNER

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12
YEAR
WINNER

Left to right: William Werley Jr., Senior Vice President – Investments;
2014 – 2025 winner Elizabeth A. Thorpe, Senior Vice President – Investment Officer

Elizabeth A. Thorpe

Senior Vice President – Investment Officer

Integrity and Experience Matter

- We support the discovery of your financial power through listening and utilizing our experience
- We provide you with the necessary tools to help you develop your lifelong goals for financial 'independence' with confidence

We strive to assist you in developing and navigating your financial goals, reducing the challenges that may arise in one's life. Ultimately, we accomplish your financial goals with clarity and precision so that you may take on your life with confidence and determination to embrace your passions. You and your family legacy deserve the best fiduciary experience. Elizabeth Thorpe is a 2014 – 2025 Five Star Wealth Manager.

WERLEY THORPE
FINANCIAL GROUP
of Wells Fargo Advisors

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FIVE STAR WEALTH MANAGER AWARD WINNER

7
YEAR
WINNER

Left to right: Three-year winner Terry Robinette; Seven-year winner Julie Pribble; Five-year winner Tara Hefty; Six-year winner John McCorvie

Peak Asset Management

Simplify and Secure Your Financial Life

- Our brand is integrity; our mission focuses on providing client experiences built on long-term relationships of trust
- Investment management and tax, financial and estate planning, all under one roof
- Fee-only, independent advisory team always acting as your fiduciary

Peak Asset Management is a Registered Investment Advisory firm founded in 1994. We offer personalized portfolio management and financial planning services. Wealth brings opportunity, but it can also bring complexity. As trusted advisors, it is our job to help our clients simplify and secure their financial lives.

Peak Asset
MANAGEMENT

1371 E Hecla Drive, Suite A
Louisville, CO 80027
Phone: 303-926-0100
peakam@peakam.com • www.peakam.com

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12
YEAR
WINNER

Left to right: Twelve-year winner Patrick Nolen; Eleven-year winner Taylor Yionoulis; Suzie Willhoit

Nolen Western Co.

Your Future Deserves a Strategy

At Nolen Western Co., we don't just manage money — we help you build a life you can look forward to. Our expert advisors are here to guide you. Whether you're planning for retirement, building wealth or protecting your legacy, our advice is unbiased, transparent and built around you.

Our core services include customized retirement and investment strategies, estate planning and retirement accumulation and distribution strategies. As fiduciaries, we offer personalized, conflict-free advice designed to help you reach your financial goals with confidence.

NW NOLEN WESTERN CO.

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taylory@nolenwestern.com
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Securities and Advisory Services offered through Geneos Wealth Management, Inc.
Member FINRA/SIPC.

FIVE STAR WEALTH MANAGER AWARD WINNER

14
YEAR
WINNER

Left to right: Fourteen-year winner Willis Ashby, President, CFP®; Alison Ashby;
Five-year winner Nick Weisert, CFP®

Willis Ashby and Nick Weisert

Five Star Wealth Managers

- Operating independently with no broker-dealer
- Investment fiduciary putting your interests first
- Managing client assets since 1992

We provide high-value, personalized investment planning services tailored to your financial life. As investment fiduciaries, our primary responsibility is to you — not to a broker-dealer. We believe the true measure of our success is your satisfaction and long-term relationship with us.

INTEGRA FINANCIAL

Greenwood Village, CO 80111
Willis: 303-220-5525 • willis@integrafinancial.ws
Nick: 303-819-1820 • nick@integrafinancial.ws
www.integrafinancial.ws

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FIVE STAR WEALTH MANAGER AWARD WINNER

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Derek N. Eichenwald

CEO, Senior Investment Executive

10
YEAR
WINNER

Triumph Capital Management
1610 Wynkoop Street, Suite 550
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dereke@triumphcapitalmanagement.com
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FIVE STAR WEALTH MANAGER AWARD WINNER

Robert H. Bastiaans

CFP®, APMA™, MSFS, CLU®, ChFC®, BFA™, Private Wealth Advisor

14
YEAR
WINNER

Ameriprise Financial

R.H. Bastiaans and Associates
A private wealth advisory practice of
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Office: 303-689-7424
bobbastiaans.com

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For 48 years, I have been helping clients develop financial planning strategies that address multigenerational planning as well as day-to-day needs. My talented team and I strive to enhance our clients' abilities to make financial and investment decisions, developing strategies tailored to their needs.

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Daniel Schutte

Principal, Fund Manager

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303-968-9330
Dan@SchutteFinancial.com
SchutteCapital.com
3801 E Florida Avenue, Suite 600
Denver, CO 80210

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- **2024 Hedgeweek Hedge Fund of the Year award winner**
- **2023 Morgan Hedge award winner with No. 1 ranking**
- **2020 – 2025 Best Business award winner**

Daniel founded Schutte Financial from a passion for helping clients reach their goals faster. The firm has a five-star client rating with leading investments, including a hedge fund for accredited investors and institutions ranked No. 1 for performance.

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FIVE STAR WEALTH MANAGER AWARD WINNER

Lauren Williams

CFP®, Lic. 7061164

TCI WEALTH ADVISORS

1401 17th Street, Suite 330
Denver, CO 80202
Phone: 303-296-2196
lauren.williams@tciwealth.com
www.tciwealth.com/denver/lauren-williams

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Deron L. Hickman

Financial Advisor, Managing Director

2 YEAR WINNER

Ameriprise Financial

260 Josephine Street, Suite 200
Denver, CO 80206
Phone: 303-222-2609
deron.hickman@ampf.com
www.ameripriseadvisors.com/deron.hickman

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Lori J. Miller

CFP®, M.S., Registered Principal/Wealth Advisor, Financial Planner

11 YEAR WINNER

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Leann Canty

President, CFP®, CFS™, EA, CAS®, CSA®

7 YEAR WINNER

Canty's Financial Strategies, Inc.

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Financial Advisor

WEDBUSH

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Tyler Otto

Financial Advisor

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Centennial, CO 80112
Phone: 720-833-4433
tyler@escapevelocityfinancial.com
www.escapevelocityfinancial.com

As an independent advisor, Tyler has the freedom, knowledge and capacity to work closely with his clients. He is familiar with the myriad investment types available and how to choose the investment that best aligns with one's goals. He can focus on his clients' needs and have the flexibility to help them make financial adjustments as needed throughout their ages and stages of life.

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FIVE STAR WEALTH MANAGER AWARD WINNER

Continued from FS-2

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G. Martin Agebrand · Morgan Stanley

Allen David Andes · Investment Professionals of Colorado Inc.

John Lee Arnold · Robert W. Baird & Co.

Susan Gough Baldwin · Legacy Wealth Partners

Laurie Dolores Barela · Vargas Wealth Management

Ali Barghelame · BWA Financial

Jared David Barkmeier · Mariner Wealth

Daniel I. Barotz · Focused Alpha

Gordon William Bauer · LPL Financial

Bruce Richard Bendell · Mercer Global Advisors

John Russell Bennett · First Command Financial Services

Donald Billings · Charles Schwab & Co.

Ken Stephen Blair · Edward Jones

Diana Lynne Bobka · Western Wealth Management

Donna McDermott Boender · Wells Fargo Advisors

Chet Charles Bogdan · Equity Development Corporation

Kean O. Boucher · Boucher Wealth Management Group

Alexa B. Brascetta · Aligned Wealth Strategies

Stephen Roland Brubaker · ERSI Wealth Management

Robert Logan Campbell · Transform Wealth

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Peter Jon Coleman · Coleman Capital & Risk Management, Inc.

Ryan Michael Cook · Triumph Capital Management

Bartley Arthur Corfee · Corfee & Associates

Richard Paul Costner · G5 Financial Group

Keith E. Cusack · LPL Financial/ WealthClarity

John Leland Davis · Ameriprise Financial Services, LLC

Jordan Mark Dechtman · Dechtman Wealth Management

W. Greg Denewiler · Denewiler Capital Management

Ralph David Diaz · Wells Fargo Advisors

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Jeffrey J. Donahue · LPL Financial
Kathleen Ann Drake · Ameriprise Financial Services, LLC
Ed John Durica · AlphaCore Wealth Advisory
Robert Schuler Eberhardt · Eberhardt Wealth Management
Samantha L. Ediger · Morgan Stanley
Galina Yakovlevna Esterby · Morgan Stanley
Jodi Rene Fleisher · Morgan Stanley
Gustin Deloran Fox-Smith · FS Advisors Wealth Management
Karl Fredrick Frank · A&I Wealth Management
Harvey Friedentag · Friedentag Portfolio Management
Geoffrey Todd Gervasini · Wakefield Wealth Management
Tiffany Anne Gilmore · Wells Fargo Advisors
Stephen Mark Gordon · Cornerstone Asset Management
Gerald Allen Graham Jr. · Cetera Advisor Networks
Barbara Jean Grant · Wells Fargo Advisors
Elbert Clark Griggs · Griggs Wealth Management
Whitney Winslow Grimm · Ameriprise Financial Services, LLC
Alexander Strachan Hackley · Front Range Financial
Nicholas Manning Hamilton · The Hamilton Group
Chad Michael Harmon · A&I Wealth Management
Roger Kent Harris · R.Kent Harris & Associates, Ltd
Samantha Jane Hedberg · PFS Investments
Shelley Elizabeth Hertel · LPL Financial
Marla Triester Hinman · Raymond James & Associates
Alexander I. Hock · Focus Partners Wealth
Robert L. Holland Jr. · Holland Financial, Inc.
Heather Dianne Holtzinger · Grandview Investment Advisors, LLC
Malcolm AW Horn · Alliant Credit Union
Jeffrey Thomas Huff · Highlands Wealth Management Group
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Thank you!

FOX 31

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Source: Nielsen. P25-54. July 2025 Ratings

THE OVERSIMPLIFIED GUIDE TO:

Cutting Your Own Christmas Tree

Forgo pricey farms and faraway national forests this year, and instead take advantage of a little-known program that allows you to chop down a Tannenbaum close to home. Andrew Perri, Denver Mountain Parks' manager of forestry and natural resources, let us in on the holiday hack. —JESSICA GILES

1. Secure your seasonal showpiece (and do your part to reduce wildfire risk) when you **apply for one of 250 free permits** to harvest a tree in a forest near Evergreen via Denver Parks & Recreation's Denver Mountain Parks division. Email denvermountainparks@denvergov.org between Black Friday (November 28) and December 21.

2. The cutting area is located off a paved road, so four-wheel drive isn't required, but you'll want to wear snow boots and gloves. **Pack a bow or pruning hand saw**, rope, and a blanket or tarp to prevent the wind from stripping your tree's lovely branches on the ride home.

3. **Opt for a conifer with a trunk no larger than six inches in diameter.** Firs tend to have the flimsiest limbs, which may not support your vintage ornament collection. Perri's go-to greenery? Our state tree, the blue spruce. "They are a bit pokey, but that helps keep the kids away from the presents," he says.

4. You'll want to give the star atop your tree plenty of room to shine, so select a height that leaves about one foot between the crown of the conifer and your ceiling. **Cut as close to the ground as possible.**

5. Wrap and hoist your piney prize atop your car and **tie it down at two points**—one at the base and one near the top—with the bottom of the tree toward the front to reduce wind resistance. Before you bring it inside, make one last cut at the base, then fully submerge it in a stand filled with one to two inches of fresh water.

ILLUSTRATION BY SIMONE MASSONI

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